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ABSTRACT

This report evaluates the Chicago Public Schools' 1992-93 Prekindergarten Program for 3- to 5-year old children at risk of academic failure. During the 1992-93 academic year, the State Prekindergarten Program served 10,735 3- and 4-year-olds at 286 sites throughout the city. The report describes and evaluates the program's four components: (1) a screening component to identify eligible children; (2) an educational component to prepare at-risk preschool children for success in school; (3) a health component to stimulate and encourage growth in physical health and ability; and (4) a parent component to involve parents in the education of their children and assist them in obtaining the necessary services to provide for their family's welfare. In the context of the particular components, the report describes the program's identification procedures to document at-risk children; educational intervention consisting of experiences designed to promote positive self-image and learning through growth in cognitive functioning, language and communication skills, social-emotional awareness, and physical health and ability; and a planned program of parent activities, including classroom volunteer opportunities, parent meetings, workshops, field trips, and health and social support services. (AA)

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REPORT

RESEARCH, EVALUATION & PLANNING

ILLINOIS INITIATIVES FOR EDUCATIONAL REFORM

EVALUATION OF THE 1993 STATE PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

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CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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General Superintendent of Schools

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ILLINOIS INITIATIVES FOR EDUCATIONAL REFORM

EVALUATION OF THE 1993 STATE PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

Department of Research, Evaluation and Planning

Prepared by

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General Superintendent of Schools

CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

November 1994

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PROGRAM FACTS

Title:	State Prekindergarten Program
Program Purpose:	To identify and prepare educationally at-risk three- to five-year-old children for school success
Program Features:	Screening component to identify at-risk three-to five-year-olds. Educational intervention consisting of experiences designed to promote positive self-image and learning through growth in cognitive functioning, language, and communication skills, social-emotional awareness, and physical health and ability. A planned program of parent activities including volunteering in the classroom, parent meetings, workshops, field trips, and health and social support services.
Funding Source:	Illinois Initiatives for Educational Reform
Funding Level:	31,326,000 dollars
Funding Period:	September 1992 - August 1993
Eligibility:	Children who, because of their home and community environment, are subject to such learning disadvantages that their performance on a standardized screening instrument indicates they do not have the readiness skills to be successful in school.
Location:	341 classrooms in 286 sites throughout the city
Age Level Served:	Three- to five-year-old children (not age-eligible for kindergarten)
Staffing:	One teacher and assistant per classroom Central office coordinators, eight screening teams, and eight cluster teams which include a coordinator and family resource personnel
Number of Students:	10,735 children
First Year of Funding:	1986

EVALUATION SUMMARY

This report evaluates the Chicago Public Schools' 1992-93 State Prekindergarten Program. The program targets three- to five-year-old children who are at risk of academic failure, and provides them with a learning environment designed to foster their language, social-emotional, physical, and cognitive development.

The $31.326 million program has four essential parts: 1) a screening component to identify eligible children; 2) an educational component to equip these young children with the requisite skills for success in school; 3) a health component to promote the family's complete physical, nutritional, and emotional health; and 4) a parent component to encourage parents to involve themselves in their children's education and to assist these adults in obtaining the necessary services to secure their family's welfare.

During the 1992-93 academic year, the State Prekindergarten Program served approximately 10,750 three- and four-year-olds in 340.5 classrooms at 286 sites throughout the city. Almost 55 percent of these children were African American, about 35 percent Latino, almost 8 percent white, non-Latino, with the remaining 3.7 percent identifying themselves as Asian, Pacific Islander, and Native American.

Staff

State Prekindergarten specifically hired staff qualified for work with young children. Teachers who worked with limited English proficient (LEP) children were encouraged to obtain a bilingual and/or English-as-a-Second-Language Endorsement. This year only 34 did not have the early childhood certificate. Those teachers who want to continue in the program next year had to formally outline their plans for acquiring the appropriate certification by the July 1998 deadline. State Prekindergarten also sought to staff each classroom with a teacher and/or assistant who spoke the children's language. This year 24 of the 341 teachers had a Transitional Bilingual K-12 Language Endorsement; 49 teachers and 113 assistants spoke Spanish. Given the language diversity in Chicago's school-age children, the program should encourage more teachers to obtain Language Endorsements and bilingual assistants to become certified as teachers in early childhood education.

The program sponsored staff development activities throughout the year for classroom, screening, and family resource personnel. In monthly cluster meetings and special inservices, staff learned how to develop appropriate literacy, science, and math curricula; helped them deal with classroom management issues; and exposed them to current trends in education. Also, the Department of Early Childhood Education again held its biannual "Symposium for Classroom Staff Working with Linguistically- and Culturally-diverse Children and Families."

Overall, this year's staff development activities accomplished their goal: They provided staff with the knowledge, support, and practices to better meet the need of State Prekindergarten students and their families. One broad-based recommendation for improvement was for extensive use of small-group discussions.

Screening

During the 1992-93 academic year, the staff screened 10,686 children, 10,504 of whom were eligible for the program. Only 8,201 of the eligible children could be enrolled because many of the slots were filled by children remaining in the program a second year (three-year-olds returning for their four-year-old year).

The screening team used a variety of economic, social, cognitive, developmental, and health factors to decide which children were eligible. The factors used were: 1) a child's inability to speak and/or understand English; 2) documented proof that a child was abused or neglected; 3) the child came from a low-income family; 4) evidence of a child's chronic illness; and 5) her/his below-age-level performance on standardized screening instruments. Together these indicators suggested that children did not yet possess the skills necessary for academic success and/or that certain health, home, or community variables unfairly disadvantaged them vis a vis future academic achievement.

During the 1992-93 academic year, the screening component was restructured. Previously, screening staff from eight State Prekindergarten Cluster offices conducted all screenings. This year the eight cluster teams were reorganized into three Developmental Screening Centers (North, Central, and South). Approximately 80 staff members (teachers, teacher assistants, nurses, health assistants, and hearing and vision specialists) now constitute the city-wide screening team.

Observations revealed that teams generally adhered to proper screening and selection procedures, and that they did so in an effective and efficient manner. The teams were usually organized, established rapport with the children, and gave the children clear directions that they understood.

Observers noted several persistent problems:

- Several positions on the screening teams were vacant
- Some rooms were not large enough for screeners to interview parents in privacy, and many sites did not have child-size furniture
- Parents did not come at scheduled times or came without appointments
- Lack of uniformity in the number of screenings scheduled at various sites led to some being overburdened and others being underutilized
- Lack of consistent criteria for determining children's English proficiency
- Failure to serve all children in need of intervention because of inadequate funding

The Department of Research, Evaluation and Planning recommends the following to alleviate the above problems:

- Prearrange, with the principal, proper facilities in which to conduct screening

- Send letters or call parents to remind them of screening appointments
- Allow parents who come without an appointment to wait for an opening or schedule a new date for screening
- Provide substitutes for absent screeners
- Allow sites which traditionally have open screening time to advertise throughout the year
- Increase the emphasis on spring and summer recruitment
- Establish and maintain uniform criteria to help screeners determine children's English proficiency
- Continue to lobby for full, adequate funding of this program to service all in need

Education

Observations of State Prekindergarten classrooms showed that most operated according to proposed guidelines. All observed classrooms had interest centers; nearly all provided activities for a range of developmental abilities as well as opportunities for children to actively explore their environment. In most observed classrooms, teachers responded positively to children, expressing respect and acceptance regardless of the children's behavior. Teachers encouraged language and literacy development through meaningful experiences such as listening to stories, one-on-one conversations, and peer collaborations. This year observers found that more teachers facilitated children's learning by extending their play, asking open-ended questions, and encouraging students to solve problems for themselves. Too often, however, adults solved problems that children could have resolved themselves or avoided situations in which such "problems" might have occurred, thus missing a "teachable moment." Observers suggest that teachers might engage in additional open-ended activities and questions to stimulate children's creativity and reasoning skills.

Many teachers addressed language and ethnic issues by integrating into both the curriculum and classroom the symbols, rituals, music, and language of African American, Latino, and Asian children. However, these materials generally mirrored the school's student population. Teachers and assistants were considerably less likely to acknowledge and address gender biases and often overlooked differences in family composition and lifestyle. Given children's diverse family situations, teachers need to bring them into the classroom and portray them in a positive light. With the increased focus on including special needs children, observers saw more pictures illustrating physically-challenged people, and in a classroom with several hearing-impaired students, the teacher used both oral and signed English.

Overall, children enrolled in State Prekindergarten during the 1992-93 academic year mastered the readiness skills necessary for continued success in school. Based on teacher observations, 75 percent or more of the children mastered the skills appropriate for their age level. The average three-year-old mastered 15 or more of the 50 items at the end of the year than at the beginning. The average four-year-old mastered 18 more of the items at the end of the year. Both results represent a gain of 1.5 or more standard deviations from pre- to posttest.

In the longitudinal study of approximately 14,000 State Prekindergarten graduates, teachers' ratings of students' performance and scores on the *Iowa Tests of Basic Skills* showed that children who attended preschool (the more at-risk children, based on screening measures) generally performed comparably or slightly better in kindergarten through fourth grade than a comparison group who did not have preschool experience. However, children's academic performance steadily dropped as their time away from preschool increased.

Research conducted in the Chicago Public Schools and elsewhere indicates that early intervention is more effective and longer lasting if it continues through second or third grade. Given this finding, the Department of Early Childhood Education should push for changes so that every child be served to age eight through an early childhood unit (*Chicago's Challenge: Serving Young Children with Commitment, Collaboration, and Excellence*, 1992).

Health and Nutrition

As an essential part of the State Prekindergarten's mission and effectiveness, the program provides comprehensive health services to enrolled children. The program also coordinates a health component for parents. Through this dual strategy, the program tries to secure children's physical and mental health now and to encourage families to make health life choices, thus promoting and ensuring children's long-term health.

To this end, State Prekindergarten allocated numerous and multiple resources--personnel, materials, training sessions, and medical screening. Teachers and assistants promoted proper health and nutrition habits in the classroom through nutrition activities, by eating healthful meals together, washing hands before meals and after toileting, and discussing how these and other activities maintain good health. Nurses and other health team members followed up in cases where screenings had not been completed or where the screening or classroom teacher identified potential health problems or risks, giving counseling and referrals when warranted. Health staff also educated parents on good health and nutrition practices, and how/when to utilize health resources in their communities. Parent meetings and workshops, newsletters, health fairs, and one-on-one counseling constituted the main vehicle for this education.

Although observations document these and other health and nutrition activities, it is difficult to measure their effectiveness because changes in families' health and nutrition habits are hard to quantify or to document over the long term.

Parent and Family Component

Research has suggested that greater parent participation results in better student social adjustment and academic performance (A.J. Reynolds and Bezruczko, 1993). Because of these findings, State Prekindergarten placed significant emphasis on parent participation. The program's parent component enables staff and parents to work together to better meet the educational needs of students.

The parent involvement component had several crucial aspects: to increase parents' self-esteem and strengthen family pride and give parents the opportunity to learn about their children's needs, growth, and development.

To accomplish the former, it helped parents assess their needs and locate resources benefiting the entire family. By linking parents with service agencies in their communities, the program helped them obtain information about adult literacy programs, educational resources, and medical, mental health, and social services.

To meet the latter goal, the program sought to involve parents as volunteers in their children's classroom. While assisting the classroom staff, parents had the opportunity to observe how young children learn. Time in the classroom, as well as parent meetings and monthly newsletters, also enabled parents to develop the skills to encourage their children at home.

Parents who actively participated in the program expressed their satisfaction. They indicated that this participation had given them a better understanding of how children learn and develop, and had brought the family together. Many parents felt that they were now better parents, and that, through these experiences, they had established closer and more secure ties with their child's school.

While teachers' records suggest that parents participated slightly less that last year, teacher and parent questionnaires showed minimally higher figures. Regardless of which figures are correct, the program should encourage more parent participation. Research has shown that parents who are involved with their children's education at the preschool level tend to stay involved throughout their children's educational career. In general, children whose parents continue to be involved in their education demonstrate greater gains in achievement. To achieve this goal, parent participation might be stressed more fully beginning at the initial parent-school contact--the screening. Perhaps through innovative strategies the program can better integrate parents into all its aspects and increase family involvement. Only through seeking new ways and sharing successful ideas can it accomplish its goal of involving parents and staff in a joint partnership.

INTRODUCTION

This report is an evaluation of the Chicago Public Schools' 1992-93 (FY 93) State Prekindergarten Program. *The School Code of Illinois*, amended by *House Bill 90*, provided for grants to public school districts to identify children ages three to five who were at risk of academic failure and to provide appropriate educational programs for the identified children. The Chicago Public Schools (CPS) opened their first classes under this grant in February 1986. In fiscal year 1992-1993 (FY 93), the CPS received a $ 31.326 million grant, an increase of approximately 3 million dollars over the previous year, to continue its prekindergarten program for at-risk children.

The FY 93 State Prekindergarten Program had four components: a screening component to identify eligible children, an educational component to prepare at-risk preschool age children for success in school, a health component to stimulate and encourage growth in physical health and ability, and a parent component to involve parents in the education of their children and assist them in obtaining the necessary services to provide for their family's welfare. In order to maintain a high-quality program, many staff development opportunities were provided for each component.

The evaluation design included multiple indicators of possible program effectiveness. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) published guidelines for appropriate, quality programs for young children. The NAEYC guidelines and the State Prekindergarten Program goals and objectives were the standards for assessing program implementation. The evaluation process also conformed to NAEYC's guidelines for the assessment of young children. Data sources used in the evaluation were observations, staff and parent questionnaires, teachers' ratings of children's progress, and children's performance on a variety of assessment instruments, including the *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised* (PPVT-R), the *Pre-Language Assessment Scales* (PRE-LAS), and the *Chicago Early Assessment and Remediation Laboratory* (EARLY).

The 1992-93 State Prekindergarten Program served approximately 10,750 age-cycle three- and four-year-olds in 341 classrooms at 286 sites. Sites continued to be selected based on the need in the community, available space, and support of the schools' principal and local school council. Some classrooms were opened at community agency sites where the need was high and space was not available in the local school.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT COMPONENT

In an effort to comply with the goals and objectives of the Department of Early Childhood Education, the State Prekindergarten Program, as stated in the 1992-93 proposal, strives to do the following:

- assist children in developing a positive self-image and respect for other people
- provide learning opportunities which are meaningful in the context of the child's experiences and development
- "help parents develop skills that will assist them in working with their children at home through planned activities that will help them recognize and carry out their role as the primary educators of their children" (*State Prekindergarten Program 1992-93 Proposal*, p. 20)
- provide activities that develop the whole child; physical, cognitive, language, social, emotional, personal, and creative
- promote optimum health of children and families through prevention, early identification and intervention, and health education
- "develop awareness of cultural diversity through multicultural activities" (*State Prekindergarten Program 1992-93 Proposal*, p. 20)
- "enhance the delivery of services to children and their families and link the State Prekindergarten Program with community child-care agencies through staff participation in a series of inservice training sessions" (*State Prekindergarten Program 1992-93 Proposal*, p. 23)

Staff Qualifications

In order to accomplish these goals, qualified staff were needed for every position. All teachers assigned to the State Prekindergarten Program had to have an Early Childhood Certificate (Type 04) issued by the Illinois State Board of Education. For teachers working with limited-English-proficient (LEP) children, a bilingual and/or English-as-a Second Language (ESL) endorsement was desired.

Thirty-four teachers (10 percent) did not have the early childhood certificate. All but seven (who were removed from State Prekindergarten classrooms) had filed plans for obtaining the appropriate certification by the deadline of July 1998.

Twenty-four teachers had Transitional Bilingual K-12 Language Endorsement. Forty-nine State Prekindergarten teachers and 113 teacher assistants spoke Spanish. Every attempt was made to provide classrooms with at least one staff member that spoke the language of the children.

Even well-qualified staff profit from ongoing staff development. As stated in *Staff Development: Problems and Solutions*, Elam, Cramer, and Brodinsky (1986), staff development needs to address:

- The demands of the curriculum--Teachers need help to cope with and manage new subject matter.

- The demographic challenge--Teachers need help to understand better the students of today and tomorrow.

- The demands of methodology--Teachers need help because their jobs make new demands on them; and because new research and new pedagogical knowledge offer new opportunities for better teaching and learning.

- Job-related pressure--Teachers need help because their undergraduate and graduate courses did not--and may never--cover a host of real-life, on-the-job problems.

The Department of Early Childhood Education provided the State Prekindergarten Program staff with continuous opportunities to acquire knowledge, practice skills, and receive the support needed to do their jobs. Inservices for various groups were conducted to meet this goal.

Screening Staff

In 1992-93 the reorganization of the citywide screening component took place. Up until that time the screening of Chicago's preschool-age children was conducted out of the eight State Prekindergarten cluster offices. The reorganization consisted of breaking the eight cluster teams into three Developmental Screening Centers (North, Central and South). Approximately 80 persons made up the citywide screening team that included screening teachers, teacher assistants, nurses, health assistants, and hearing and vision technicians.

Inservices were conducted throughout the year covering a wide scope of topics including:

- Restructuring of the screening teams--The entire screening staff came together to receive information on the reorganization as well as to share information with each other about the needs and characteristics pertaining to the schools they were leaving

- Developmental Screening Centers (DSC)--Individually, within each DSC, staff meetings were held to address the needs of the team. These meetings were held, for the most part, monthly and covered some of the following: questions and answers that pertain to screening, discussions on procedures, administrative information that applied to the staff, data entry issues, discussions on problems and/or situations that arose during screening, and the next month's schedule.

- Health staff issues--The Bureau of Medical and School Health Services along with the Department of Early Childhood Education held inservices for the State Prekindergarten health staff. Three inservices were held citywide for the entire health team and other inservices were conducted on an as-needed basis for either the whole team or particular group(s) within a Developmental Screening Center. Topics included, but were not limited to:

  - Healthy Moms/Healthy Kids Program
  - Delta Dental of Illinois Dental Program Services and universal precautions as related to dental services
  - Using the Student Health Information Computer Program for the tracking of health data

- Procedures for time management and keeping accurate and confidential records for reporting and recording information
- Department of Health: Lead Prevention Program
- AIDS and Chicago Public Schools' policy
- Universal precautions
- Washing and cleaning medical instruments.

- Screening procedures handbook--In order to construct an accurate procedures handbook, input was needed from the screening teams. Screening team members came together to review and discuss the document which is still in process. Questions and issues were raised and input was given that would be incorporated in the final writing of the handbook.

- *PRE-LAS* inservice--Training was provided for those teacher-screeners who were unfamiliar with the administration of the *PRE-LAS* test. Teachers learned how to interpret the rating scale for the various sections of the test, score each section, convert and interpret those scores, and record the child's results onto a master roster. The *PRE-LAS* was administered to a sample of students at the beginning and end of the school year to determine growth in English proficiency.

- Data entry--During the screening process, information was collected on each child and his or her family. This information was entered into a data base that was kept at each individual DSC until the end of the school year at which time the data was given to the Department of Research, Evaluation and Planning to generate reports for administrators, the funding agency, and other concerned parties. Training was provided to the screening staff members who were responsible for entering the data into the computers.

Classroom Staff

New Classroom Staff

A two-day orientation inservice was held for teachers and teacher assistants new to the State Prekindergarten Program. The purpose of the inservice was to ensure that new staff become familiar with the philosophy, goals, and uniqueness of the State Prekindergarten Program. Principals were notified in advance and extended an invitation to attend.

During the two-day sessions, which lasted from 8:30 am to 3:15 pm, teachers and teacher assistants participated in small-group workshops and whole-group presentations. Topics covered included: the philosophy of the State Prekindergarten Program, team building, family resources, curriculum resources, budget information and nutrition. In addition, small-group workshops focused on classroom-planning activities such as classroom management and field trips.

Suggestions for future inservices were given, as well as the suggestion to have longer workshops to allow presenters to cover the material without being rushed. The participants, as a whole, found the inservice worthwhile, providing them with useful information which "took the guess work out of the guidelines and procedures of the program."

Monthly Cluster Inservices

Each cluster office conducted monthly staff development inservices. Topics for the inservices were selected based on the results of a needs assessment survey administered to their teachers and teacher assistants. Even though the inservices were customized to meet the needs of the individual cluster staff, there was some overlap of topics.

For the most part, peer implementors and/or their colleagues conducted the inservices, otherwise outside presenters were contracted. The following were some of the topics covered in the monthly cluster meetings:

- Developmentally appropriate curriculum
- Lesson plans
- Conflict resolution
- *Child Assessment Profile* (CAP) form
- Observation of children
- Appropriate field trips
- Street safety
- Antibias multicultural curriculum
- Classroom management through setting up appropriate environments
- Creativity in the classroom
- Child abuse and reporting procedures

The responsibility of both the peer implementors and curriculum resource teachers in relation to staff development was to assist with the planning and implementation of the monthly staff inservice meetings. The peer implementors were teachers who volunteered to work with the cluster facilitator and curriculum resource teachers once a month after school to organize their clusters' monthly inservice meetings. The curriculum resource teachers provided support to peer implementors and the cluster teachers.

Summer Staff Development

During the summer of 1993, teachers and teacher assistants in the State Prekindergarten Program attended three staff development inservices. Two were held at their respective clusters and the other was held at Saucedo Elementary School where all eight clusters came together. The focus of the inservices was on various aspects of antibias curriculum. Within each of the clusters, the topic was examined differently. One cluster utilized their peer implementors who conducted small-group discussions. Another cluster had their staff bring a rice or bread dish from their ethnic background to share. Other clusters brought in guest speakers to address the issue. From the responses given on the evaluation surveys distributed after each inservice, over 80 percent of the respondents replied that the inservices provided information that they needed to know and presented ideas for implementing an antibias curriculum in the classroom. A few teachers commented that they would have liked even more concrete activities to use in the classroom.

The citywide inservice at Saucedo, however, was less successful. The respondents equally rated the keynote speaker positively and negatively. Those rating her negatively said that she was a poor presenter who read to her audience for two hours and who had misconceptions of how children view people. Some participants were offended by stereotypes the speaker used and mistakenly thought the speaker was endorsing the examples. The group was felt to be too large and the video shown was thought by several to be biased or inaudible.

While 70 percent of the respondents agreed that the small-group discussions, held after the keynote speaker, included practical suggestions for implementing an antibias curriculum, others felt that the groups were too large or the information given was not helpful. The suggestion was made to use teachers from the State Prekindergarten Program as speakers in the future. They could explain what worked for them and give useful ideas for the classroom.

Overall, over 80 percent of the participants indicated the antibias issues were a good choice for the inservices. Slightly fewer (75 percent) respondents felt the inservices included useful ideas and covered a wide range of potential biases.

Family Resource Staff

Family resource staff, including teachers and social workers, attended four staff development inservices throughout the year. School nurses also attended some of these meetings. These inservices addressed the following:

1. Internal issues such as, how the family resource teachers function within the schools and what their roles and responsibilities are. Small-group formats provided an opportunity for family resource teachers to share pertinent information with each other.

2. Environmental health issues covering such topics as lead poisoning and air pollutants in addition to how to best serve families with these and other environmental concerns.

3. Social service needs--Outside agencies came to speak on health issues for the families including AIDS and nutrition. Information about how to access mental health and other social services in the community was also shared.

4. Increasing parent involvement--Outside agencies were invited to speak, family resource staff shared icebreakers that they found effective in getting parents involved in meetings, and parents were invited to share their ideas and perceptions on what they liked and how to encourage greater parent involvement.

Cluster Staff

Curriculum Resource Teachers

Curriculum resource teachers, as a group, received training on the purpose and use of the *Child Assessment Profile* (CAP) form. This gave them a general understanding of the form that would enable them to provide assistance to teachers who would need help filling them out. Defining job responsibilities and reviewing procedures for ordering supplies and setting up resource rooms were also a part of the inservice.

In addition, the curriculum resource staff met once a month for half-day inservices to discuss issues related to the classroom and other educational issues. They reviewed educational materials for their appropriateness in the classroom, attended a workshop on Antibias at the Harkness House, participated in a self-reflection activity which allowed them to look at the reasons why they became teachers and identify how those reasons could be carried over into their positions as curriculum resource teachers, and visited the

Museum of Mexican Fine Arts to expose them to another culture and to introduce them to different resources that are available.

Clerical Staff

Clerical staff from all eight cluster offices came together to receive training on such things as telephone etiquette, on-line supply ordering, and other procedures that would enhance their skills. This provided continuity among offices and the opportunity to be in a positive learning situation with their fellow colleagues.

Adopt-a-Classroom Staff

Staff development for the Adopt-a-Classroom Program was done in conjunction with the Chicago Coordination, Education, Research, and Training (C-CERT) Project. The theme of the project was *How does assessment drive our programs*?

"The training component proposed to work with staff from preschool through grade three to facilitate their discovery of how assessment permits teachers to delineate where children are in relation to their cognitive, social, emotional, and language development so that teachers can work with parents for the welfare of the children." (C-CERT proposal, p. iii)

Teachers and teacher assistants in the Adopt-a-Classroom Program received inservice training once a month at the Mason Elementary School from 3:00 - 5:00 pm. During these meetings, the program philosophy and overview were presented, and assessment techniques, i.e., the *Kindergarten Curriculum Guide*, the *Child Assessment Profile* (CAP), observations, and portfolios were discussed.

Special Events

Summer Camp

In the summer of 1993, eight three-day sessions were conducted for a sample of parents and children participating in the State Prekindergarten Program. These sessions were held at George Williams Camp on Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. In the outdoors, away from the hustle and bustle of the city, parents were engaged in a variety of activities that encouraged healthy relationships between themselves and their child and fostered positive interrelationships with other parents.

Preparation for this experience took place during the month of April 1993, when approximately 200 State Prekindergarten teachers and their assistants went to the camp to have a weekend planning session. The objective of the weekend was to have the teachers and assistants plan activities that their children and parents could do while attending camp during the summer. The George Williams staff were available to train the teachers and assistants by giving them ideas of various activities they could do with their parents and children, having them tour the camp grounds to they would be familiar with the layout, and conducting a scavenger hunt so that they would become aware of and able to identify things of nature that were in the environment.

Feedback given on the evaluation of the April planning inservice indicated that the weekend was successful. High ratings showed that the session was well organized, the camp staff were helpful, and the sessions

provided an understanding of procedures and responsibilities for the variety of camp experiences in which they would be involved. Some suggestions for improvement included:

- assure fairness in housing assignments
- allow teachers who have attended two or three times before to return
- have children bring a backpack to carry personal items (baby wipes, tissues, etc.) and to collect things

Vendor Fair

In the fall, the Department of Early Childhood Education held a Vendor Fair. Classroom teachers and teacher assistants from State Prekindergarten, Child Parent Centers, and Head Start were in attendance along with invited Early Childhood professionals from programs outside of the Chicago Public Schools.

The participants' responses on the vendor fair evaluation were quite favorable. They indicated that the materials displayed were interesting and appropriate for early childhood education and that the vendors were very informative. It was also noted that the vendors provided an adequate supply of handouts and sample materials and that there was an adequate representation of vendors.

Overall, the fair was thought to be well planned and organized, held in a convenient location and hosted at a helpful time of year. Some suggestions for the improvement of future fairs were to provide transportation by each cluster so that travel would not be a problem, allow the vendors to sell at the fair, provide more music materials, and distribute more freebies.

Week of the Young Child

The national celebration of the Week of the Young Child was held April 18-24, 1993. Activities that week focused on directing the whole community's attention to the needs of the young child and exploring what educational, social, and other services are and/or should be available to them.

Many activities were held in the Metropolitan Chicago area organized through the Chicago Association for the Education of Young Children (CAEYC). The theme for the week was *Their Future in our Hands: Our Future in Theirs* and the focus was *Strengthening Connections in Every Arena of Life... and, Asking the Question... Is This in the Best Interest of Children and Families?*

As part of the celebration, the Department of Early Childhood Education sponsored a creative arts exhibit. The art work was displayed in early childhood classrooms citywide and at four public libraries throughout the City of Chicago (Austin, Harold Washington, Sulzer and Woodson). The young artists were children ages 0-8 who participated in early childhood education programs. Parents' multimedia art projects and hand-crafted work were also included for display.

Administrators' Conference

The Administrators' Conference was held at the Harold Washington Library in conjunction with the Week of the Young Child. The Administrators' Conference was held for principals and Local School Council chairpersons from schools having early childhood programs. The keynote speaker, Suzanne Carothers from New York University spoke on the integration of early childhood philosophy through the grades.

After the presentation, participants were invited to tour the library and view the exhibit of art work done by children and parents participating in early childhood education programs.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The goal to "ensure the quality of service delivery to children and their families through a comprehensive, appropriate, and ongoing staff development program" (*State Prekindergarten Program 1993-94 Proposal*, p. 13) has successfully been met. Throughout the year several opportunities were provided for staff to come together and receive training on a broad range of topics and issues.

Staff development was received by screening staff, new classroom teachers, cluster staff, and family resource, curriculum resource, and clerical staff. These planned staff development inservices provided the knowledge, practice, and support for staff to more effectively and successfully meet the goals and guidelines of the program. In addition to staff development inservices, special events were conducted throughout the year including: Summer Camp, the Early Childhood Vendor Fair, Week of the Young Child, the Multicultural Symposium, and the Administrators' Conference.

According to evaluation results, participants of the training sessions and special events generally found them to be organized, informative, appropriate, and useful. The suggestions made for improvement of future inservices included providing more concrete activities to use in the classroom, monitoring the size of small and large group discussions, and using program teachers as speakers.

In addition, it is important that teachers continue to be encouraged to seek their early childhood certificates. To effectively meet the needs of increasing numbers of children from non-English-speaking backgrounds, teachers should also be encouraged to obtain a Transitional Bilingual K-12 Language Endorsement or English as a Second Language (ESL) training.

Finally, staff development should continue to be an integral part of the State Prekindergarten Program. Focus should continue, not only on topics identified by staff through needs assessments, but also on current educational issues being discussed in the research literature.

SCREENING COMPONENT

The screening component was evaluated to assess whether it was conducted consistently throughout the city, according to proposal guidelines and procedures, and to determine whether it correctly identified those children who were at risk of academic failure. All children brought by parents who wished to enroll them in the State Prekindergarten Program were screened. Staff screened 10,686 children for the 1992-93 program and 10,504 were determined to be eligible.

Screening Procedures

The screening team used a variety of economic, social, cognitive, developmental, and health factors to determine which children were eligible for the State Prekindergarten Program. Factors used were 1) the child's inability to speak or understand English; 2) documented proof that a child was abused or neglected; 3) low family income; 4) child's chronic illness; and 5) child's performance on standardized screening instruments indicative of a developmental delay. Considerable research studies have shown that these factors are often associated with academic failure.

Screening teams were housed at three centers located in the north, central and south sections of the city. The teams were comprised of teachers and assistants trained to administer and score the screening instruments and work with children and their families. All screening teams had at least one bilingual member to enable children to be screened in their dominant language. Usually, school personnel or members of the community translated when a child or parent spoke a language other than English or Spanish.

Teams conducted screenings at designated sites throughout the city all year. To initiate the process, parents wishing to enroll their child in a State Prekindergarten classroom, completed a preliminary registration form at their neighborhood school or subcontracting site. Teams used this information to schedule screening appointments for the parent and child.

Staff from the Department of Research, Evaluation and Planning observed each of the screening teams at least once during the school year. Observations of the activities revealed that proper screening and selection procedures were followed and that screeners were generally effective and efficient. They were usually organized, established good rapport with the children, gave clear directions, and made sure the children understood those directions, gave few hints, and followed proper testing procedures. However, based on the observations, some sites were better organized than others - parents and children did not have as long a waiting time, and a majority of the parents and children showed up for their appointments.

Observers noted continuing problems with inadequate space available for the entire screening team. Some rooms were not large enough to ensure privacy for parent interviews and sufficient child-size furniture was not available at some sites. This often caused delays in getting started as other tables were brought in, or teacher screeners borrowed them from the State Prekindergarten classroom. A long wait may have affected children's performance during screening and did delay the remaining appointments for that day. Although screening teams and coordinators said they made every effort to work with principals to obtain adequate screening facilities, space and appropriately-sized furniture continued to be a problem in some sites, especially overcrowded ones.

The screening workload was another concern. Screening at subcontracting sites was left until last because screening teams were very busy and the children at subcontracting sites were already receiving some services. As a result, screening at some subcontracting sites did not take place until well into the school year.

Screening Results

Results of the screening are presented in Tables 1.1-1.3. Table 1.1 gives the demographic information on the 10,686 children screened. Table 1.2 presents information about the children's health and social-emotional development. Table 1.3 shows how they performed on various measures of fine and gross motor, language, and cognitive development.

Demographic Information

The demographic data for children screened for the 1992-93 school year are similar to those of previous years. As Table 1.1 shows, a few more boys than girls were screened. Of the children screened, half came from single-parent households. More than three-fourths of the children reached by the screening program had not been enrolled previously in a preschool or day-care program.

Approximately 54 percent of the children screened were African American, 34 percent were Latino, seven percent were white, non-Latino, and three percent were from other ethnic backgrounds. The primary home language for the majority of these children (66 percent) was English. Spanish was the dominant home language for 29 percent of the children. More than one-third of the children were designated limited English proficient (LEP) at the time of screening. Screeners used information from the *Home Language Survey* (HLS) to assist them in determining if a child was LEP. Many screeners expressed concern about how to determine English proficiency based on the HLS. Because they had no clear, uniform criteria for determining English proficiency, screeners often used their own best judgment after talking to the mother and child. Sometimes children who lived in a home with an adult who spoke a language other than English were listed as LEP.

Health Data

Screening team members collected health data about each child from the parents. Children received points because of high-risk factors present during pregnancy and birth. Approximately 20 percent of the mothers reported that they used drugs, alcohol or tobacco materials during their pregnancy. Mothers of 11 percent of the children screened had not received sufficient prenatal care and approximately 15 percent of all mothers were at risk because of their young age. Approximately 41 percent of the mothers interviewed stated their children experienced some type of birth trauma, usually a cesarean section. Other risk factors at birth such as low birth weight and failure to thrive were less common (10 and 5 percent, respectively).

As shown in Table 1.2, most children passed the vision and hearing tests at the time of screening (53 percent and 56 percent, respectively). Approximately 33 percent of the children, however, were unable or unwilling to participate in the hearing or vision screening because of shyness, immaturity, or other factors. In addition, 12 percent were not screened for vision and 11 percent were not screened for hearing because the technicians were absent. Enrolled children who were unable to be tested at screening were successfully retested during the year. Fewer than two percent failed the vision or hearing test.

Social-Emotional Assessment Results

An assessment was made of each child's social-emotional development based on the screener's observation of the child's behavior at screening and the parents' reports of home behavior. The results are given in Table 1.2. Selection points were given for behaviors indicative of developmental delays. The higher the number of selection points, the more behavioral indicators of immaturity the child exhibited. Only 16 percent of the children screened received no selection points in this category. Thirty-six percent received one or two points for behaviors indicative of social-emotional immaturity. These results are similar to last year's results.

Chicago EARLY Assessment Results

The screening assessed the child's language and readiness skills using the *Chicago Early Assessment and Remediation Laboratory* (EARLY) and the *Expressive Language Supplement*. A Spanish version of the EARLY was administered by bilingual screeners to any child whose primary language was Spanish. The EARLY is a normed screening instrument that yields scores in the areas of gross motor, fine motor, language and concepts, visual discrimination, and memory. The *Expressive Language Supplement* provides additional information on the language development of the child. The most weight in determining whether a child was likely to be at risk was given to a child's performance on the EARLY. According to the EARLY manual, remediation should be offered to children in any areas where they score at or below the 30th percentile. The data in Table 1.3 indicate that 71 percent or more of the screened children scored at or below the 30th percentile in each EARLY area except visual discrimination. Consistent with past results, children were weak in language. Over 74 percent of all children screened scored at or below the 20th percentile on the language section of the EARLY. A total of 16 percent of the children were unable to complete the EARLY. This percentage has increased each year over the last three years.

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised Results

The *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised*(PPVT-R), a measure of receptive vocabulary, was administered at the time of screening. The *Test de Vocabulario en Imágenes Peabody*(TVIP) was administered to Spanish-speaking children. Results on the vocabulary test corroborated the findings of the EARLY screening that most of the children were very weak in language. As shown in Table 1.2, the median standard score on the PPVT/TVIP was 70, the same as last year. On a national scale, this score translates to a percentile rank of two. Over 60 percent of the screened children scored below the 10th percentile; less than five percent scored at or above the national median (50th percentile).

While the PPVT-R/TVIP was not used to determine eligibility for the program, it was given to each child to address his/her receptive language ability, provide data about the validity of the screening process, and to collect baseline data for evaluating the effectiveness of the State Prekindergarten Program. The PPVT-R/TVIP is given again in the spring to the children enrolled in the program.

Table 1.1
Demographic Information on Children Screened for 1992-93 Program

(N = 10,686)

Category	Subcategory	Number	Percent
Sex			
	Male	5,404	50.5
	Female	5,260	49.2
	Not Reported	22	0.3
Ethnicity			
	White	830	7.8
	African American	5,796	54.2
	Latino	3,668	34.3
	Asian/Pacific Islander	309	2.9
	Native American	9	0.1
	Other	31	0.3
	Not Reported	43	0.4
Home Language			
	English	7,072	66.2
	Spanish	3,067	28.7
	Other	505	4.7
	Not Reported	42	0.4
English Proficiency			
	Limited English Proficient	3,888	36.4
	English Proficient	6,457	60.4
	Not Reported	341	3.2

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Category	Subcategory	Number	Percent
[illegible]			
	Both Parents	4,691	43.9
	Single Parent	5,409	50.6
	Other Adult	218	2.0
	Not Reported	368	3.4
[illegible]			
	None	8,263	77.3
	Private Preschool	317	3.0
	ESEA Chapter 1	15	0.1
	Special Education	15	0.1
	Head Start	390	3.6
	Other State Funded	41	0.4
	Title XX	28	0.3
	Other Preschool	829	7.8
	Unknown	788	7.4
[illegible]			
	Head Start Guideline	3,049	28.5
	Free Lunch Guideline	5,409	52.2
	Not Low Income	2,064	19.3

Table 1.2
Health Information and Social Emotional Development on Children Screened for 1992-93 Program

(N = 10,686)

Test	Result	Number	Percent
[illegible]			
	Pass	5,708	53.4
	Fail	195	1.8
	Unable to Complete Testing	3,481	32.6
	Not Screened	1,302	12.2
[illegible]			
	Pass	6,050	56.6
	Fail	16	0.2
	Unable to Complete Screening	3,454	32.3
	Not Screened	1,166	10.92
[illegible]			
	Little or No Prenatal Care	1,194	11.2
	Substance Abuse by mother	2,229	20.9
	Mother Under 18 or Over 35 Years of Age	1,584	14.8
	Other High Risk Pregnancy	3,639	34.1
	Birth Trauma	4,386	41.0
	Low Birth Weight	1,029	9.6
	Failure to Thrive	523	4.9
	Chronic Health Problems	1,329	12.5
[illegible]			
	None	1,677	16.0
	One	1,874	17.9
	Two	1,947	18.6
	Three - Four	2,825	27.0
	Five - Six	1,465	14.0
	More than Six	669	6.4
	Unknown	229	2.1

Table 1.3
Information on Language, Motor, and Cognitive Development on Children Screened for 1992-93 Program

(N = 10,686)

Test	Number	Percent
Peabody		
1st-9th Percentile	6,617	74.8
10th-39th Percentile	1,758	19.9
40th-59th Percentile	280	3.2
60th-89th Percentile	174	1.9
90th-99th Percentile	20	0.2
Unable to Complete Testing	1,813	17.0
Unknown	25	0.3
EARLY		
Category	Median Percentile Score	Percent at or below 30th Percentile
Gross Motor	20th	71
Fine Motor	20th	76
Language	20th	74
Visual	30th	58
Memory	20th	71

Eligibility

Screeners gave children selection points for a variety of risk factors. A minimum of 15 selection points were required to qualify for the State Prekindergarten Program. Children with the highest number of selection points were considered the most at risk and were enrolled in the program first. Based on the comprehensive screening procedures and selection criteria, 98 percent of the three- and four-year-olds screened for the 1992-93 program were eligible. Not all of the 10,504 eligible children could be served, however, because of the limited availability of space and funds. Only 8,201 children were enrolled because over 2,000 of the children were last year's three-year-olds returning for a second year. Children who could not be enrolled were placed on waiting lists.

Conclusions and Recommendations

During the 1992-93 school year 10,686 children were screened. Most screening teams effectively identified at-risk children throughout the city, with results supporting the premise that children admitted into the program were at risk of academic failure. Observations of the screening process indicated that screeners attended competently to the needs of parents and children. All eligible children could not be enrolled in the program, however, because of limited space and funds.

Review of the screening results and evaluation data raised several concerns. Details of these concerns and suggestions for remediation follow.

Inadequate and/or inappropriate space was a problem at many sites. If screening is held at an already established site, the State Prekindergarten class could be canceled on the day of the screening. In addition to freeing up space, this would enable classroom staff to participate more fully in the screening. It would also ensure the availability of child-sized furniture. If screening is done at a new site with limited facilities, screeners should try to negotiate in advance with principals for a time when appropriate space could be made available in the school or to use space at a nearby site, i.e., a church or park building.

Incomplete screening teams, walk-ins, and parents who failed to show up for appointments or came without the necessary documentation slowed up the screening process. Remind school clerks, perhaps by sending a letter, of the information they need to give parents regarding screening. Also, when parents call a school for information on the program, the clerk should refer them to the appropriate screening team or cluster office to make an appointment. Walk-ins on the day of screening slow down the process and increase waiting time for families. Substitutes are needed to fill in for absent team members or for members who are on leave.

Children at subcontracting sites were often not identified for the program until mid-year or after. Generally the parents of children at subcontracting sites were working and it was difficult to find a time when both the parent and the screening team could be present. If subcontracting sites revised their entrance forms to include the information needed by the screening team, screeners could obtain family data and health histories from the site administrators on the days they came to screen the children. Any additional questions could possibly be handled by phone. This streamlined procedure should reduce the amount of time for screening at subcontracting sites.

Some existing public school sites did not achieve full enrollment until mid- year. Schools should advertise for children in the community throughout the year. Screenings conducted in the summer would help ensure full classes in the fall at both public school and subcontracting sites. The emphasis on spring recruitment and nonstop summer screening should continue. In addition, clerks should be reminded to give interested parents complete and accurate information so they come to the screening with the necessary documentation.

Many children either do not receive a vision or hearing test at the time of screening or are unable to be assessed because of the vision or hearing technician's absence or the child's immaturity, inability to follow directions, or frustration with the screening process. These children are given selection points and then re-examined within six months of enrollment in the program. Perhaps children could be given a less

rigorous initial screening by trained teacher assistants rather than technicians. Children with possible severe problems or concerns could be referred then for appropriate follow-up. Children who were unable would continue to receive selection points. Either these children or all children would receive a more comprehensive screening from the technicians after enrollment in the program.

All children who need the early intervention do not receive services or do not receive the full intervention. Screening only determines the child's eligibility for the State Prekindergarten Program. Children are not enrolled immediately following the screening, and, in some cases, there is a delay of several months or a year before an opening becomes available at a given site. Program administrators, educators, and parents should continue to lobby state legislators to fully fund this early intervention program.

Lack of clear-cut criteria resulted in uneven application of selection points for English proficiency. Uniform procedures for identifying children who are limited English proficient are needed.

EDUCATION COMPONENT

The State Prekindergarten Program was designed as an intervention program to help reduce the number of students entering kindergarten at risk. To determine the program's effectiveness, the evaluation of this component examined whether the prekindergarten curriculum met the needs of the students. Information from the evaluation also provided baseline data for future studies.

The education component was evaluated through interviews, questionnaires, on-site observations, teachers' ratings of children's readiness skills and pre- and posttesting in language development. The evaluation documented the number of children served and provided information regarding demographics, characteristics of the intervention, and the immediate and long-range effects of this intervention on the children's physical, cognitive, and affective development. Questionnaires were distributed to parents and classroom staff to get their impressions of the program and to acquire data about the home and classroom environment of the enrolled students.

The State Prekindergarten Program served almost 11,000 three-to-five-year-old children in 341 classrooms at 286 sites during the 1992-93 school year. Table 2 presents demographic and health information on children enrolled during each full year of program operation. In 1992-93, approximately 50 percent of the enrolled children were African American and 36 percent were Latino. The percentage of enrolled African American children has been relatively stable for the last three years. The percentage of Asian children enrolled has increased slightly. The percentage of enrolled white children decreased this year from over 11 percent to just under 10 percent.

The percentage of English-speaking children increased substantially this year from 53 to 65 percent. Two scenarios may explain this change. The method of reporting changed this year. The home language was reported by teachers at the end of the year instead of by screeners at the time of screening. A second possible explanation is that last year, the home language of 15 percent of the children was unknown. This year the home language was not reported for less than four percent of the children. Perhaps the children whose home language was not reported last year were English-speaking because the percentage of Spanish-speaking children remained almost the same.

Approximately 80 percent of the enrolled children each year were from low-income families and were eligible for the free lunch program. This year low-income families were divided into two different groups: low income qualifying for the federal lunch subsidy and low income qualifying under the Head Start guidelines. The Head Start guideline for low income is a substantially lower figure. Consequently, children who qualified under the Head Start guideline received more selection points than those who were only eligible for the federal free lunch program.

Information obtained from screening records on "Previously Attended Programs" and "Family Structure" was incomplete. Consequently, valid conclusions on these variables could not be made.

Information on children's major health problems was collected during screening. During the school year, nurses and health assistants provided follow-up services to these children and to children whose health problems were missed at screening but were identified later by the classroom teachers. Over 90 percent of

the enrolled children were listed as not having any chronic health problems. A very small percentage of the children had a vision problem (0.4 percent). Less than 0.1 percent were listed as having a hearing problem. Although six percent of the children were identified with chronic health problems such as asthma, epilepsy or chemical dependency, the health staff indicated that the number is actually much higher. The reported numbers do not include children who may have serious health problems but whose health records were not entered on the computer.

Table 2
Demographic Statistics on Enrolled Children

(By percentage)

Category	Subcategory	1987 n=2643	1988 n=2839	1989 n=3903	1990 n=5454	1991 n=8401	1992 n=9330	1993 n=10735
[illegible]								
	First Year	69.7	70.3	74.4	78.0	80.0	76.4	76.4
	Second Year	30.3	29.7	25.6	22.0	19.4	23.6	23.6
Sex								
	Male	49.8	51.4	51.5	49.9	50.0	51.6	50.3
	Female	50.2	48.6	48.5	50.1	49.2	48.4	49.7
Ethnicity								
	African American	70.4	69.0	61.6	55.9	50.0	48.3	50.2
	Latino	21.4	22.3	28.4	30.5	35.8	36.6	36.2
	White	6.6	6.5	7.4	11.1	11.2	11.5	9.7
	Asian/Pacific Islander	1.4	1.9	2.4	2.3	2.7	3.2	3.5
	American Indian	–	–	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.4
	Unknown	0.2	0.3	–	–	–	–	–
Home Language								
	English	79.5	78.4	72.3	64.0	55.0	53.1	65.0
	Spanish	17.3	18.0	23.0	18.3	29.8	27.4	27.2
	Arabic	1.1	1.1	1.3	0.7	0.8	0.6	1.0
	Other	2.1	2.5	3.4	2.6	2.6	3.7	3.1
	Missing	–	–	–	14.4	11.8	15.2	3.7

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Category	Subcategory	1987 n=2643	1988 n=2839	1989 n=3903	1990 n=5454	1991 n=8401	1992 n=9330	1993 n=10735
English Proficiency								
	Limited English Proficient	20.4	21.2	26.3	22.0	30.0	32.5	32.8
	English Proficient	79.6	78.8	73.7	78.0	70.0	67.5	67.2
Lunch Status								
	Free	88.3	85.2	83.9	72.8	79.7	81.8	83.7
	Reduced	5.1	6.1	7.0	6.8	6.9	6.7	6.5
	Not Eligible	6.6	8.7	9.1	10.6	10.4	8.8	8.5
	Unknown	–	–	–	9.8	3.0	2.7	1.4
Family Status								
	Both Parents	38.5*	35.6*	43.0	42.6	30.1	31.4	27.6
	Single Parent	59.6*	46.4*	42.7	38.4	27.8	27.7	27.5
	Other	–	–	1.2	1.7	1.3	1.4	1.2
	Unknown	1.9*	18.0*	13.1	17.3	40.8	39.4	43.7
Previous Program								
	Yes	9.9	11.0	9.1	6.3	4.6	4.3	11.0
	No	71.4	69.2	73.6	67.5	49.2	52.0	32.5
	Unknown	18.7	19.8	17.3	26.2	46.2	43.7	56.5
Health Status**								
	No Problem	–	–	–	–	–	86.4	93.6
	Vision Deficit	–	–	–	–	–	2.1	0.4
	Hearing Deficit	–	–	–	–	–	0.3	0.0
	Other Problem	–	–	–	–	–	11.9	5.9

* Data on first-year students only; information on second-year students were not available.

**Percentages total more than 100 because a child may have more than one type of health problem.

Types of Programs

The State Prekindergarten Program has grown substantially since it opened in 1986 with 76 classrooms serving 2,355 children. The number of classrooms has increased more than fourfold since it began in 1986. During the 1992-93 school year, approximately 10,700 children were served in 341 classrooms. The Department of Early Childhood Education offered a variety of program options and delivery models in an effort to serve as many children as possible and to meet the diverse needs of children and families.

Regular Day Option

The State Prekindergarten Program served children ages three and four years and five-year-old children who were not yet age-eligible for kindergarten. The most common delivery model was a program that served between 17 and 20 children daily for two and one-half hours either in the morning or the afternoon. The classroom staff (a teacher and an assistant) and parent volunteers provided a developmentally appropriate program for the children.

Extended-Day Option

Because of a lack of space and overcrowding in some areas, several sites implemented the extended-day option during the spring of 1990. The initial plan was to provide services for these children until space in the building became available or until modular units were installed. In a few cases permanent space was found, but the need for the extended-day option continued with 18 classrooms during the 1992-93 year. Preschool children attended school daily from 2:45 pm--5:15 pm in classrooms used during the regular school hours by prekindergarten or kindergarten children. The extended-day teachers received inservice training and funds were allotted for furniture, equipment, and supplies.

Demonstration Center

While providing children with a developmentally appropriate program, the Demonstration Center allowed both new and experienced early childhood educators the opportunity to observe and discuss exemplary practices. The Demonstration Center also was used to pilot innovative projects and ideas. The center contained four classrooms. Many of the children were bused to the center for the all-day sessions (8:30 am - 2:30 pm).

Collaborations

Integrated Preschool Demonstration Centers. Children with special needs and State Prekindergarten students were taught in the same classroom setting at the Integrated Preschool Demonstration Center. A State Prekindergarten teacher, a special education teacher, and an assistant planned an appropriate program to meet the needs of all the children. The Integrated Preschool Demonstration Center was developed as a cooperative effort of the Chicago Public Schools and the not-for-profit community agency, El Valor Corporation. The program was housed at El Valor. The goals of the project were the socialization of all children, the development of concepts in the children's first language, and the involvement of parents as an integral component of the program. Students attended half-day sessions. A second classroom, implemented at Stock School in the 1990-91 school year, used the integrated approach to serve students

with special needs and State Prekindergarten children in the same classroom setting. Another integrated classroom opened in 1992-93 at Beard School.

Columbus-Maryville Project. The State Prekindergarten Program supports a preschool classroom at Columbus-Maryville Hospital. Preschool-age children whose mothers are enrolled in the Haymarket Drug Addiction Program at Columbus-Maryville attend the State Prekindergarten Program. In addition, the classroom is open to children who have been removed from their family's custody by the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) or who, for some other reason, i.e., abandonment, have no one to care for them. The Columbus-Maryville placement for children is often a temporary one--perhaps a day, perhaps four months. Consequently, enrollment numbers in the preschool classroom vary greatly and the turnover in the number of children served is high.

Mary Thompson Hospital Project. The CPS Department of Early Childhood Education collaborates with the National Association for Perinatal Addiction Research Education (NAPARE) at Mary Thompson Hospital to offer a State Prekindergarten program for children whose mothers attend the center. Mary Thompson Hospital is a residential and outpatient drug treatment center. Some children live there with their mothers while others commute to State Prekindergarten as their mothers come for daily classes and drug supervision. Lutheran Welfare Services provides day care for infants and toddlers and wrap around services for the preschoolers whose mothers are attending the treatment center. Children at this facility are generally enrolled for a longer time period than at the Columbus Maryville site.

Together We Grow. Family Focus and the State Prekindergarten Program collaborate at Mason and Dvorak schools. The State Prekindergarten provides an all-day program for children whose parents take GED classes at the centers. Parents of State Prekindergarten children see them during the day at mealtimes. Family Focus also collaborates on this project by providing the day care for infants and toddlers whose moms are attending the classes.

Infant Toddler Day Care Center. The State Prekindergarten site at Orr High School assists young moms who are still completing high school. Orr runs a day-care facility for its students who have recently had a baby. The program enables these young women to stay in school by providing on-site child care for their children aged six weeks to three years. Mothers with children older than three are encouraged to send them to the State Prekindergarten class there. In addition, children from the Infant Toddler Program are enrolled in the State Prekindergarten classroom when they become age-eligible. Jane Adams Hull House provides a day-care program for the infants and toddlers and wrap-around care for the preschoolers.

Subcontracting. The subcontracting program began as a pilot project during the summer of 1990 and continued through the 1992-93 school year. The State Prekindergarten Program coordinated developmentally appropriate prekindergarten programs for children who already received day-care services.

Subcontracting became necessary because there were many areas of the city with large numbers of children who needed preschool services but no available spaces in the public schools. In addition, many working parents needed the wrap-around services of a day-care program. The pilot project was so successful that it was expanded every year. In 1992-93, new classrooms and new agencies were added to bring the totals to 59 classrooms in 31 agencies, serving over 1,000 children.

Classroom Observations

Staff from the Department of Research, Evaluation and Planning visited 245 classrooms to determine the degree and effectiveness of program implementation. The observations lasted an average of 62 minutes. They fulfilled this evaluation activity as stated in the *State Prekindergarten Proposal* (p. 55): "Evaluators will conduct classroom observations with a structured instrument reflecting the goals and procedures suggested in the proposal and emphasized in the inservice sessions." The guidelines of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), as expressed in their *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs* (1988), were also part of the evaluation criteria. In general, the observations revealed that classrooms were arranged and activities conducted in accordance with NAEYC and State Prekindergarten guidelines. Discrepancies were brought to the attention of the program and cluster coordinators.

The majority of the observations were made during the morning, although some afternoon and extended-day classes were observed as well. The average class size was 16.6 and the average number of students in attendance was 14, for an attendance rate of 85 percent. Instruction was provided completely or almost completely in English in 71 percent of the observed classrooms. In 19 percent of the observed rooms instruction was provided in predominantly English with some Spanish, and instruction was predominantly Spanish in 5 percent. Language of instruction information was missing on five percent of the observations.

During 41 percent of the observations, no parents were present. One parent was present during 29 percent of the visits, and two parents in 15 percent. Parents talked to children one-on-one during 43 percent of the observations.

Observers focused their attention on four areas: the learning environment, teacher-student interactions, the curriculum, and literacy development.

Learning Environment

According to NAEYC guidelines (pp. 3-4), in a developmentally appropriate learning environment:

1) all areas of a child's development: physical, emotional, social, and cognitive are provided for through an integrated approach;
2) teachers prepare the environment for children to learn through active exploration, [manipulation, experimentation], and interaction with adults, other children, and materials;
3) learning activities and materials should be concrete, real, and relevant to the lives of young children;
4) programs provide for a wider range of developmental interests and abilities than the chronological age range of the group would suggest.

Nearly all the interest centers in the observed classrooms provided an appropriate learning environment. They were fully equipped and materials were accessible to children, in good condition, well maintained, and provided for variety in chronological and developmental age range. Housekeeping, blocks, manipulatives,

and art and reading centers were available in almost all of the observed classrooms. Thus, the following objective, as stated in the proposal (p. 56), was met: "In at least 90 percent of the observed classrooms, interest centers will be established and used to promote learning."

Interest centers observed in use included housekeeping (56 percent of the observations), blocks (55 percent), art (48 percent), and writing table (18 percent). Science centers were least likely to be in use during an observation (6 percent). However, centers that were in use provided teacher-supported play and opportunities for active exploration. Science centers included aquariums with fish, turtles, frogs or crabs. Some had hamsters or other live animals. More elaborate centers had materials that encouraged children to formulate ideas and test simple hypotheses with scales and weights. Although interest centers were well established in the classrooms, their variety did not always encompass all that the proposal suggests (p. 32): interest areas will include "housekeeping, blocks, books, music, science, art, woodworking, manipulatives, and sand and water play." Woodworking, sand and water play, and science areas, although often present, were rarely observed in use.

Evaluation staff reported problems with the physical environment at only a few sites. Some observers noted dirty floors or windows, cold classrooms, or the lack of a bathroom attached to the room. Extended-day classes were sometimes conducted in kindergarten rooms that were not well equipped or which had materials that were off limits to the prekindergarten children.

Interactions

NAEYC guidelines clearly state that "the developmental appropriateness of an early childhood program is most apparent in the interactions between adults and children" (p. 9). Suggestions include (pp. 9-11):

1) Adults respond quickly and directly to children's needs, desires, and messages and adapt their responses to children's differing styles and abilities; ...
2) Adults provide many varied opportunities for children to communicate; ...
3) Adults facilitate a child's successful completion of tasks by providing support, focused attention, physical proximity, and verbal encouragement; ...
4) Adults facilitate the development of self-esteem by respecting, accepting and comforting children, regardless of the child's behavior.

Teachers were observed talking one-on-one with children in 82 percent of the observed classrooms. In general, almost all interactions between teacher and child were positive. In 75 percent of the observed classrooms (compared to 90 percent in 1992 and 85 percent in 1991), teachers responded positively to children, expressed respect and acceptance of children regardless of behavior, used positive guidance techniques, and provided opportunities for children to cooperate, work together, and solve interpersonal problems.

Seventy-four percent of the observed teachers helped children work out their conflicts in acceptable ways such as redirecting and encouraging appropriate behaviors. Some teachers and assistants used physical gestures, such as touching or hugging, to praise and promote children's self-esteem.

Children and staff had additional opportunities for positive social interactions at mealtime. During meals, however, the teachers conversed with the children only 50 percent of the time and sat with the children 37 percent of the time.

In sum, child interactions almost met the proposal objective that "in at least 80 percent of the observed classrooms, children's and teacher's activities will promote both receptive and expressive language development" (p. 56).

Curriculum

NAEYC's guidelines for a developmentally appropriate early childhood curriculum include the following (pp. 5-7):

1) Teachers provide a variety of activities and materials; teachers increase the difficulty, complexity, and challenge of an activity as children are involved with it and as children develop understanding and skills; ...
2) Adults provide opportunities for children to choose among a variety of activities, materials, and equipment; and time to explore through active involvement. Adults facilitate children's engagement with materials and activities and extend the child's learning by asking questions or making suggestions that stimulate children's thinking; ...
3) Adults provide opportunities for child-initiated, child-directed practice of skills as a self-chosen activity. ... Repetition that is initiated and directed by the child, not adult-directed drill and practice, is most valuable for assimilation; ...
4) Multicultural and nonsexist experiences, materials, and equipment should be provided for children of all ages.

In addition, the State Prekindergarten Proposal states (pp. 32-33) that age-appropriate activities will be designed "to develop fine and gross motor skills and visual perception, ... to improve children's understanding, reasoning, and conceptualizing skills, ... and to nurture critical thinking, creative expression, and cooperative learning." Another objective (p. 20) is "to develop an awareness of cultural diversity through multicultural activities."

In 81 percent of the classrooms, State Prekindergarten teachers did provide meaningful opportunities in which students could manipulate and experiment with developmentally- and age-appropriate concrete materials, an increase from last year's 72 percent. However, while teachers actively created a suitable environment, evaluation staff saw them truly facilitating learning and helping students discover in only 55 percent of the observed classrooms. Moreover, teachers were not often observed extending play or encouraging students to reason beyond a simple level. In 48 percent of the classrooms visited, teachers were observed clearly inspiring children to develop problem-solving techniques. However, too often adults solved problems for children or avoided situations in which such "problems" might occur instead of using the conflict as a "teachable moment." In 67 percent of the observed classrooms, children were given numerous occasions to choose from a broad array of possible activities.

Using NAEYC's and the Department of Early Childhood's guidelines, a truly antibiased classroom would give children a multitude of chances to actively engage with others having physical, ability, and cultural

differences. More importantly, this classroom would affirm children for their uniqueness and nourish their self-esteem. In the observed classrooms, many teachers addressed the issue of an antibiased environment by incorporating into the curriculum and classroom the symbols, rituals, music, and language of African American, Latino, and Asian children. Teachers decorated their classrooms with photos and other pictures representing various ethnic backgrounds and occupations. Some teachers used music, food, and holiday activities to legitimate cultures other than the white mainstream culture. Teachers also used music, dolls, cooking utensils, costumes, and books depicting their students' different ancestries, historic legends, and ethnic experiences. However, as in previous years, these materials generally mirrored the school's student population.

Observers found teachers inadvertently reinforcing traditional gender divisions instead of directly confronting them. Girls were seen playing in housekeeping while boys played in the block center. Moreover, teachers continued to divide their classrooms by gender even when the division was irrelevant to the activity. To wash hands or go to gym or an assembly, girls formed one line and boys another. This unneeded separation only tells children that an important distinction exists, a distinction that research has shown may severely impede the later academic performance of girls.

Several classrooms integrated children who were physically challenged into the State Prekindergarten classroom. Extra staff were provided to assist the children so they could participate in classroom activities. Another classroom had several hearing impaired children join in classroom activities for part of the day.

Although progress has been made in many curriculum areas, the program does not seem to have completely met the objective (p.56): "Classroom ... observations will confirm that the program operated as intended in the proposal." Further work is needed in nurturing critical thinking and creative reasoning and in developing an awareness of cultural diversity.

Literacy Development

NAEYC defines appropriate practice for early childhood language development and literacy as follows (p. 55):

> Children are provided many opportunities to see how reading and writing are useful before they are instructed in letter names, sounds, and word identification. Basic skills develop when they are meaningful to children. An abundance of these types of activities is provided to develop language and literacy through meaningful experience: listening to and reading stories and poems; taking field trips; dictating stories; seeing classroom charts and other print in use; participating in dramatic play and other experiences requiring communication; talking informally with other children and adults; and experimenting with writing by drawing, copying, and inventing their own spelling.

In addition, the State Prekindergarten Proposal underscores the importance of language development (p. 33): "Language development is a major part of the program, and emphasis is placed on communication and literacy skills. Planned and informal language activities are emphasized through learning experiences which encourage free expression and spontaneous speech while considering the children's interests, abilities, and needs. A literacy rich environment facilitates story dictation, dramatization, and writing."

Table 3 presents percentages of language development activities observed in classrooms in 1992 and 1993. Unfortunately, all the activities except one (Children taking books home) were observed less frequently in 1993 than in 1992. In addition, writing tables were observed in only 35 percent of classrooms and most had only minimum materials (paper and pencils). Although reading areas were observed in most classrooms (90 percent), few teachers actively integrated literacy materials into all activities.

Table 3
Language Development Activities Observed 1992 and 1993
(by percentages)

Activity	1992	1993
Groups of children working together	42	36
Teachers asking open-ended questions	70	62
Shared reading activities	25	17
Labels in English	70	64
Experience charts	13	11
Children taking books home	60	67
Children looking at books	42	39

These results indicate that State Prekindergarten teachers need to do more to meet this objective as set forth in the program proposal (p. 19): "To increase receptive and expressive vocabulary and the ability to communicate, ... to increase attention span, to develop an interest in literature, and to begin recognizing symbols for words." Language development can be promoted by encouraging children to talk with one another, express their feelings verbally, and solve their own problems. Teachers can provide more opportunities for children to collaborate with one another and incorporate a variety of literacy props into all areas of the classroom. Examples of props include phone books, address books, magazines, cookbooks, notepads, checkbooks, and menus in the dramatic play areas; block building and architectural books and magazines in the block areas; and games which use literacy concepts (such as Lotto and Alphabet Bingo) in the game area. As numerous professional articles have concluded, "For children who are ... [not] privileged by the support of [literate] home resources ..., the resources of the preschool are even more important" (McGill-Franzen & Lanford, 1994, p. 273). The price society must pay for not preparing these children well for future success in reading and writing is unacceptably high.

Children's Progress

The best indicator of program effectiveness is the change that occurs in the children. Children enrolled in the program were assessed by teacher observation, using the EARLY a checklist of developmental milestones, and the *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised* or the *Test de Vocabulario en Imágenes Peabody* (TVIP). The growth assessments of the enrolled children were examined to see if the program met the physical, cognitive, and affective needs of the children. Results from each of these measures are presented in Tables 4-7.

Attainment of Readiness Skills

The EARLY was initially administered at screening and used to determine eligibility for the program. Throughout the year, during regular classroom activities, the teacher observed the child's mastery of each skill on the EARLY as well as other readiness skills. This year a new format of the checklist of developmental milestones was piloted. The new format, the *Child Assessment Summary Form*, grouped 50 milestones into 10 developmental areas. Five milestones, reputedly arranged from easiest (#1) to most advanced (#5), were included in each area. Based on their observations of the children in regular day-to-day activities, teachers noted items that children mastered and completed the form twice during the school year. Observation 1 was marked approximately one month after the child enrolled. Information from the Chicago EARLY, obtained at screening, informed that rating. Observation 2 was marked at the end of the year. A Class Progress Chart, listing students and milestones on the horizontal and vertical axes permitted teachers to keep track of and plan for children's progress throughout the year.

Because the *Child Assessment Summary Form* was a new instrument, several analyses were performed to verify its integrity and appropriateness. Validity was established by using skills from the original *Child Assessment Profile* which had been developed by a team of early childhood teachers, reviewed by leaders in the early childhood field, and then used for three years by over 300 teachers each year. The data collected by these forms on over 25,000 children enabled researchers in the Department of Research, Evaluation and Planning to identify tasks that were easy for children to master and those that were more difficult. Equipped with these data and information from the research literature about how children develop, department staff designed the *Child Assessment Summary Form* to broadly cover the range of proficiency for 2 1/2 - 5 1/2-year-olds in several developmental areas. The draft form was reviewed by early childhood teachers and leaders before being piloted during the 1992-93 school year.

Most teachers were instructed to mark the highest numbered milestone on which the child consistently demonstrated mastery. However, to test the hypothesis that the items were arranged hierarchically within each area, a sample of teachers marked every milestone their students had mastered. Results from this sample were analyzed using the Rasch model. Figure 1 shows the reliability or rigidity of the instrument. The items on the *Child Assessment Summary Form* establish a scale or ruler. The ordering of item difficulty is almost exactly the same on the posttest as on the pretest (correlation > .9). If the scale didn't have this rigidity over time, it would be useless as a measure of children's progress.

Rasch analysis of these results also confirmed that a developmental hierarchy was demonstrated by teachers' ratings. Table 4 shows the ordering of milestones within each category on the prerating (Observation 1) and the postrating (Observation 2). In four areas the order was not as expected. Reading (3 was more difficult than 4), Play (3 over 4), Fine Motor (4 over 5), and Emotional Growth (1 over 3 and 2). More importantly, the Rasch analysis demonstrated that the scale established by the *Child Assessment Summary Form* was essentially invariant from Observation 1 to Observation 2 and that individual children conformed to this pattern. The most difficult items on the prerating were the most difficult on the post. Similarly, the easiest items on the prerating were still the easiest on the post. The only exceptions were Writing (2 and 1 flip-flopped), Play (5 and 3 flip-flopped), and Social Development (4 and 3 flip-flopped).

Figure 1: Bicalibration Plot of Pre- and Posttest *(Child Assessment Summary Form)*

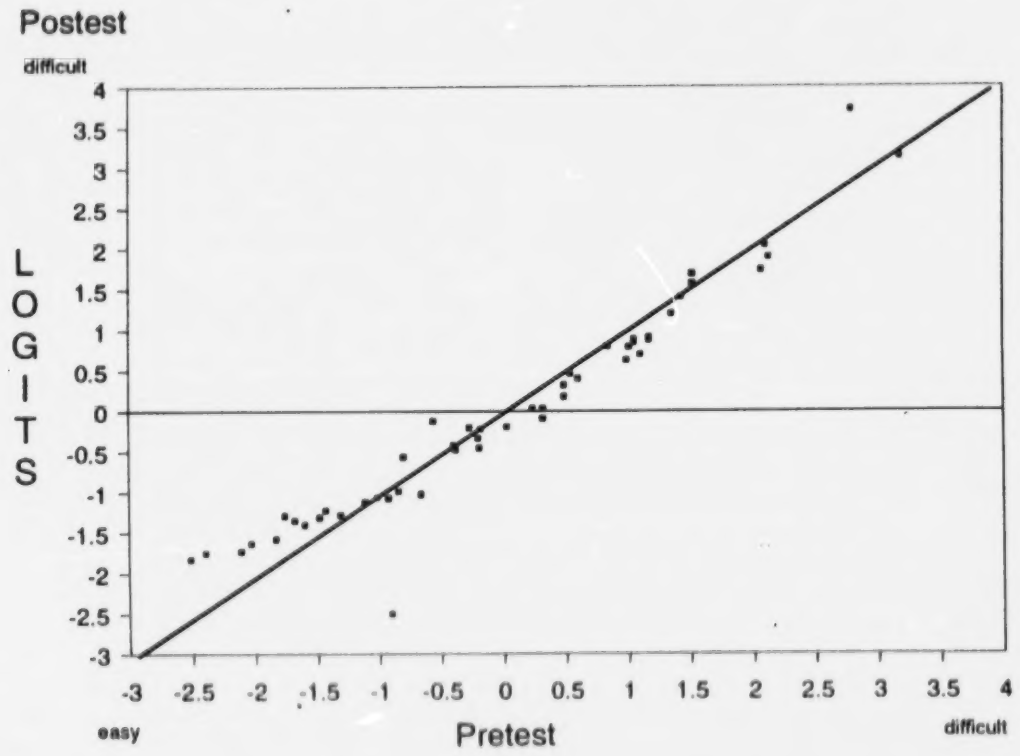


Table 4
Ordering of Skills on *Child Assessment Summary Form*
(Item numbers ranked from most difficult to easiest)

WRITING		NUMBER		READING		ORAL LANG.		MATH		GROSS MOTOR		FINE MOTOR		PLAY		SOCIAL		EMOTION	
Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	3	5	5	5	5
4	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	3	5	4	3	4	4
3	3	3	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	3	4	1	1
2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3
1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2
changed				*disordered*								*disordered*		*changed*		*changed*		*changed*	

changed = changed order between pre- and postrating

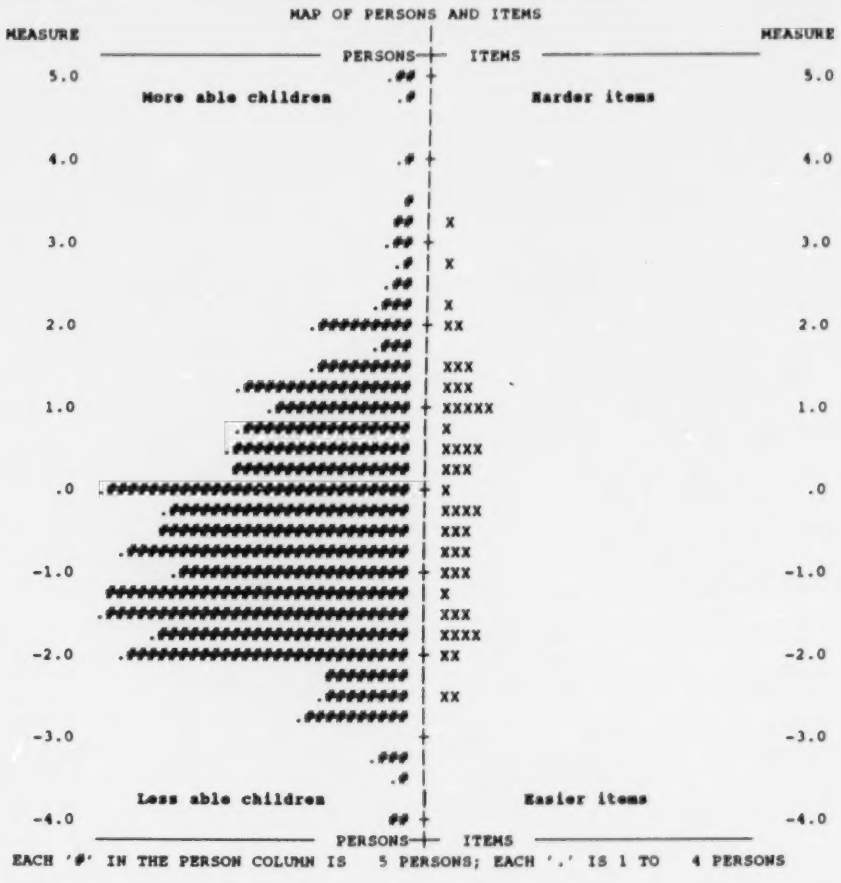
disordered = disordered but stable between pre- and postrating

Figure 2 shows how children's abilities and tasks lined up on a Rasch analysis (the ruler that equates each child with a score on a linear scale where the distance between any two scores is the same everywhere on the scale). There is a good spread of both children's ability and items. The items separated children into more than three ability levels with high reliability (reliability > .9). The tasks are centered at the middle of the children's ability distribution but spread over the entire range to give the variable good coverage. On the posttest, the tasks line up almost exactly the same on this ruler (*Child Assessment Summary Form*) but the children's ability distribution has moved considerably higher. In other words, although the order of task difficulty on the *Child Assessment Summary Form* is essentially invariant over time and children, the children's relative capabilities change. First, the children are more capable on the posttest than the pretest. This is to be expected, if only because the children are older. The ordering of children by ability, however, also changes. Children who were the most capable on the pretest may not be the most capable on the posttest. In fact, 60 percent of the children move either higher or lower on the continuum from pretest to posttest. Further analyses are being conducted to determine how much of the movement is because of family background, other sociocultural variables, and the intervention itself. Research staff are exploring answers to the question of whether some classroom practices are more effective than others and why, or whether the program works better for some students than for others.

Table 5 gives the percentage of children who mastered each item at the beginning of their preschool experience and at the end of that year or when they dropped out. In terms of the developmental areas, results were as expected. The most difficult areas were writing, oral language, math, and number. The easiest areas were fine and gross motor, play, and social and emotional development. At the end of the year, 90 percent or more of the three-year-olds mastered the first item in all areas except writing where only 74 percent mastered the first item. Only 84 percent of the three's mastered the second item overall. Mastery dropped to approximately 60 percent on the third item, 30 percent on the fourth and 15 percent on the last item in each area. In all areas except writing, 95 percent or more of the four-year-olds mastered the first item by the end of the year. Eighty-five percent or more mastered the second item. Three-fourths (70 percent for writing) of the four's mastered the third item in each category. There was a big drop in the percentage of four's who mastered items 4 and 5 (approximately 55 percent and 40 percent, respectively). A certain percentage of four's mastered everything. Further study is needed to determine if this is because the items are too easy or teachers are not marking the skills correctly.

Table 6 shows the average number of skills mastered overall (maximum is 50) and in each developmental area (maximum is 5 in each area) at the beginning and end of the school year. Overall, the average three year old mastered 15 more items at the end of the year than at the beginning. This is a gain of about 1.5 standard deviations over 12 or fewer months. (Many of the children entered the State Prekindergarten Program after the start of the school year; several as late as January to March.) The average four-year-old mastered 20 of the 50 items at the beginning of the year and 38 at the end. This represents a gain of almost two standard deviations over the year. Four-year-olds, however, were more likely to have been enrolled since the beginning of the school year because they were given preference over three's for enrollment.

Figure 2: *Pretest Measurement Summary (Child Assessment Summary Form)*



SUMMARY OF 1957 MEASURED (NON-EXTREME) PERSONS

	SCORE	COUNT	MEASURE	ERROR	MNSQ INFIT	MNSQ OUTFIT
MEAN	21.3	50.0	-.47	.38	.99 -.2	1.09 -.1
S.D.	10.6	.0	1.41	.07	.37 1.9	1.13 1.7
RMSE	.39 ADJ.S.D.	1.36	PERSON SEP	3.53	PERSON SEP REL.	.93

MAXIMUM EXTREME SCORE: 11 PERSONS

SUMMARY OF 50 MEASURED (NON-EXTREME) ITEMS

	SCORE	COUNT	MEASURE	ERROR	MNSQ INFIT	MNSQ OUTFIT
MEAN	832.8	1957.0	.00	.06	1.00 -.4	1.10 .4
S.D.	421.4	1.2	1.39	.01	.07 2.6	.29 2.6
RMSE	.06 ADJ.S.D.	1.39	ITEM SEP	22.66	ITEM SEP REL.	1.00

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Because the skills are more or less invariant but with good spread (easy to difficult) both overall and within each developmental area, markers can be identified that generally appear during normal development. This, in turn, allows for identification of developmental discrepancies among children that may be too subtle to be detected by conventional measuring methods.

Children's performance on the *Child Assessment Summary Form* provides information that supports two hotly debated theories of child development - maturation versus learning (engaging in planned, appropriate activities). To support the theory of maturation, examine the average pretest scores of three-year-olds (15.4) and four-year-olds (20.4). Neither group has had the benefit of a preschool experience yet the four-year-olds scored higher than the three-year-olds. To support the learning theory, compare the average posttest scores of the three-year-olds (29.8) with the average pretest score of the four's (20.0). Both groups were about the same age (both groups are just ending age cycle three) but the three-year-olds had a year of preschool experience. That year of preschool made considerable difference.

Table 5
Percentage of Children Who Mastered Each Item on the Child Assessment Summary Form

Activity	Three-Year-Olds		Four-Year-Olds	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
ORAL LANGUAGE	24.8 mastered no Oral Language items	3.5 mastered no Oral Language items	15.1 mastered no Oral Language items	1.7 mastered no Oral Language items
1. Names objects	73.2	96.5	82.7	98.3
2. Describes objects	42.4	82.7	57.9	92.1
3. Uses sentences with two/more ideas	21.6	59.8	34.8	80.1
4. Describes cause and effect	5.5	27.3	13.5	56.0
5. Draws conclusions	3.0	13.4	6.9	38.1
LITERACY - READING	24.7 mastered no Reading items	3.6 mastered no Reading items	14.3 mastered no Reading items	1.6 mastered no Reading Items
1. Shows interest in reading	72.6	96.4	82.6	98.4
2. Answers question about story	32.1	77.9	49.0	90.4
3. Retells story	13.4	55.5	23.0	77.1
4. Pretend to read	13.9	43.9	19.0	67.5
5. Creates story	3.8	14.0	6.3	35.3
LITERACY - WRITING	38.4 mastered no Writing items	8.2 mastered no Writing items	24.8 mastered no Writing items	3.50 mastered no Writing items
1. Expresses ideas through pictures	40.9	73.6	54.9	89.1
2. Pretends to write	30.8	75.3	43.5	89.2
3. Writes random letters	9.6	38.3	25.2	73.0
4. Writes own name	3.6	16.5	13.6	51.6
5. Uses inventive spelling	1.3	3.6	3.3	17.1

Activity	Three-Year-Olds		Four-Year-Olds	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
LOGICAL - MATHEMATICAL	33.6 mastered no Math items	6.9 mastered no Math items	19.0 mastered no Math items	2.3 mastered no Math items
1. Matches symbols, colors or shapes	63.8	93.1	78.2	97.7
2. Sorts on one dimension	30.6	77.0	48.9	91.6
3. Arranges 3 items in graduate order	12.0	48.7	22.3	77.5
4. Identifies what's missing	6.4	28.9	10.5	61.1
5. Sorts on two dimensions	2.9	12.6	5.3	36.2
NUMBER	37.4 mastered no Number items	6.8 mastered no Number items	22..8 mastered no Number items	2.6 mastered no Number items
1. Counts by rote	59.8	93.2	73.9	97.4
2. Uses one-to-one correspondence	26.4	74.3	45.7	90.3
3. Demonstrates number concepts	11.6	48.2	27.3	78.6
4. Compares groups --more, less, equal	4.6	20.9	10.4	53.1
5. Adds/subtracts concrete items	1.2	5.7	3.2	23.4
FINE MOTOR	10.8 mastered no Fine Motor items	0.8 mastered no Fine Motor items	6.5 mastered no Fine Motor items	0.4 mastered no Fine Motor items
1. Uses whole hand to grasp objects	85.7	99.2	90.3	99.6
2. Shows hand preference	59.8	92.7	72.9	97.0
3. Coordinate thumb and finger	33.6	80.5	50.1	91.7
4. Shows fine motor control	8.7	40.9	19.9	74.1
5. Buttons, starts zippers, etc.	6.0	24.6	12.3	55.0

Activity	Three-Year-Olds		Four-Year-Olds	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
GROSS MOTOR	11.8 mastered no Gross Motor items	1.8 mastered no Gross Motor items	7.3 mastered no Gross Motor items	0.5 mastered no Gross Motor items
1. Walks without bumping into things	85.7	98.2	90.0	99.5
2. Runs and jumps easily	59.8	92.4	71.1	96.6
3. Hops, walks on tiptoe	36.0	79.7	49.1	91.6
4. Moves while manipulating object	14.2	51.6	23.5	77.6
5. Executes more complex movements	6.9	24.9	11.8	50.1
PLAY	16.0 mastered no Play items	1.7 mastered no Play items	10.7 mastered no Play items	0.8 mastered no Play items
1. Actively explore environment	80.4	98.3	85.8	99.2
2. Engages in symbolic/pretend play	51.8	90.3	62.5	95.6
3. Engages in role play	18.0	64.2	27.0	82.7
4. Engages in group play	15.8	49.1	21.6	73.7
5. Cooperates with others when playing games with rules	8.5	25.0	11.3	49.3
SOCIAL RELATIONS	16.7 mastered no Social items	1.8 mastered no Social items	10.4 mastered no Social items	0.8 mastered no Social items
1. Separates easily from parent	78.8	98.2	86.1	99.2
2. Accepts teacher guidance	52.6	90.6	66.2	95.8
3. Expresses feelings in words	28.6	72.7	40.5	87.6
4. Works well with others	20.5	55.0	27.8	75.9
5. Responds to others' needs	11.6	31.3	15.1	51.4

Activity	Three-Year-Olds		Four-Year-Olds	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT	23.6 mastered no Emotional items	3.5 mastered no Emotional items	14.0 mastered no Emotional items	1.6 mastered no Emotional items
1. Follow routines	67.8	96.5	78.9	98.4
2. Helps with simple chores	54.9	91.3	66.5	96.1
3. Shows pride in accomplishments	33.2	77.7	44.3	89.1
4. Acts independently	18.0	51.2	25.1	74.2
5. Assumes responsibility for actions	11.5	29.2	14.3	52.0

Table 6
Mean Number of *Child Assessment Summary Form* Skills Mastered in 1992-93

	Three-Year-Olds (N = 2963)				Four-Year-Olds (N = 5800)			
	Observation 1		Observation 2		Observation 1		Observation 2	
Area	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Oral Language	1.4	1.2	2.8	1.3	2.0	1.4	3.6	1.3
Literacy/ Reading	1.4	1.2	2.9	1.4	1.8	1.3	3.7	1.4
Literacy/ Writing	0.9	1.0	2.1	1.3	1.4	1.3	3.2	1.4
Math/ Problem-Solving	1.2	1.1	2.6	1.4	1.6	1.2	3.6	1.4
Number	1.0	1.1	2.4	1.3	1.6	1.3	3.4	1.3
Fine Motor	1.9	1.2	3.4	1.2	2.4	1.3	4.2	1.1
Gross Motor	2.0	1.3	3.5	1.2	2.4	1.4	4.2	1.1
Plays/Works with Others	1.7	1.3	3.3	1.4	2.1	1.4	4.0	1.2
Social Growth	1.9	1.5	3.5	1.4	2.4	1.5	4.1	1.2
Emotional Development	1.8	1.5	3.4	1.4	2.3	1.5	4.1	1.1
Total	15.4	9.9	29.8	10.4	20.0	11.1	38.1	10.0

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Peabody Vocabulary Test-Revised

The *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised* (PPVT-R) or *Test de Vocabulario en Imágenes Peabody* (TVIP) was used to assess receptive vocabulary growth in the children's native language. Two English forms (L and M) and one Spanish (S) were available.

The PPVT-R/TVIP was administered at screening and again in the spring. Because the test was given every spring, children who had been enrolled for two years had two spring scores. The latest spring administration was reported as the posttest. The time between screening and entry into the program, as well as the time between entry and spring testing, varied substantially among children. Therefore, the "pre-post interval" was not consistent and represents varying amounts of instruction. In addition, levels of attendance also varied widely. For these reasons, the spring standardized PPVT-R/TVIP scores were analyzed as a function of the PPVT-R/TVIP scores at screening plus other variables to assess the impact of the program on language development.

Table 7 presents the screening and spring 1993 PPVT-R/TVIP scores. These scores are reported separately according to form because statistical analyses revealed that Form M was easier than Form L for the children served in this program.

Although children who entered the State Prekindergarten Program were very weak in language, the program seemed to have a positive impact on their language development. As last year, the median scores for children who took the English Form M for both the pre- and posttest administrations went from the first to the fifth percentile. Gains for children who took the English Form L at screening and Form M at the end of the 1993 school year were somewhat higher than last year.

Table 7
Results of *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised*

Form (Pre-Post)	N	Pretest		Posttest	
	11	Median Standard Score	Percentile	Median Standard Score	Percentile
L - M	210	50	1st	79	8th
M - M	4047	62	1st	76	5th
S - S	993	78	7th	91	27th

Children who took the Spanish Form S, on average, went from the 7th to the 27th percentile. This was a considerably bigger gain than last year's. Overall, the PPVT-R/TVIP gain scores this year were higher than last year's.

PRE-LAS

During the 1992-1993 school year, the PRE-LAS test, which measures a child's English proficiency, was administered to 509 children from 25 schools in the State Prekindergarten Program in November 1992 (the "pretest") and May 1993 (the "posttest"). Approximately 57 percent of the children tested came from Spanish-speaking homes; 29 percent, from English-speaking homes; and 14 percent, from homes where a language other than English or Spanish was spoken. Because of the differences in children's language backgrounds, the data were analyzed as a whole and according to language background.

Test scores ranged from 0 to 99. Taking both age and score into consideration, each child was assigned an English proficiency level from 1 to 5. Children with a Level 1 or 2 proficiency were considered non-English speaking. Those scoring Level 3 were regarded as limited-English-proficient speakers while Levels 4 and 5 represented fluent English speakers.

Pretest. Almost 70 percent of the students who took the pretest have scores that produced a rating of either Level 1 or Level 2, categorizing them as non-English speaking. Consistent with previous years, several children (36 percent) from monolingual English-speaking homes were categorized as "non-English speaking" on the pretest.

An additional 12 percent of all the children were rated as Level 3, limited English proficient. Half of the children falling in this category came from English-speaking homes. The percentage of children whose scores indicated fluent monolingual English competency, then, was approximately 18 percent.

Of the students whose linguistic background was English, less than half produced scores which would have indicated they were fluent speakers of English. Although these scores may seem alarming, they simply reflect the already documented slow language development of the at-risk students in the Prekindergarten Program.

Posttest. The posttest scores showed some improvement. The number of students who scored in the non-English-speaking levels decreased while the percentage of those scoring in the levels indicating limited English or fluent English proficiency increased. In fact, the scores rendering Level 4 and 5 results increased by 12 percentage points, compared to 11 percentage points last year, from the pre- to posttest. The charts on the following page summarize these test results.

To have a more accurate picture of a child's progress over the school year, each child was also assigned a gain score, the raw score from the posttest minus that of the pretest. The gain score reflects the difference between the child's performance at the beginning and the end of the year. In terms of gain scores, children from both groups performed slightly better this year than last. The gain scores for native English speakers and nonnative English speakers increased by 2.4 and 2.2 points, respectively.

Table 8.1
Mean PRE-LAS Scores and Levels

Children Tested	N	Score		Level		Gain
		Pre	Post	Pre	Post	
All	509	41.3	60.0	1.9	2.5	18.6
Native English Speakers	145	66.5	80.0	2.9	3.7	13.5
Nonnative English Speakers	364	31.3	52.0	1.5	2.0	20.7

As expected, the students who came from English-speaking homes consistently averaged better raw scores and English fluency levels. However, the nonnative English speakers (including both Spanish-speaking students and those categorized as "other") showed a slightly higher mean gain score, i.e., increased English competency.

Table 8.2
Percentage of Students in PRE-LAS Levels

Children Tested	N	Pretest Level			Posttest Level		
		1-2	3	4-5	1-2	3	4-5
All	509	70	12	18	53	17	30
Native English Speakers	145	36	21	43	19	15	66
Nonnative English Speakers	364	84	9	7	66	18	16

The chart above separates the level scores into their three categories of meaning: 1-2, indicating non-English-speaking students; 3, indicating students with limited English proficiency; and 4-5, indicating fluent English speakers. (As discussed above, levels are a function of score and age.)

Although the students who spoke English as a second language showed a higher mean gain score, the above chart shows that children who were native English speakers made greater progress in terms of their "level" scores. As in previous years, the students who came from non-English-speaking homes also showed progress within the levels established by the test, but less progress in moving between them. The percentage of children from non-English speaking homes who exhibited the competency of a fluent English speaker in the posttest increased by seven percentage points, while the percentage of children from non-

English-speaking homes considered non-English speaking according to their level score decreased by 18 percentage points.

When the children tested were examined as a whole, the largest group showed appreciable progress from the pre- to the posttest, improving their scores by more than 10 points. Sixty percent of the children whose native language was not English and 44 percent of the children from English-speaking backgrounds showed an appreciable gain over the course of the year. This finding reinforces the mean gain score results examined earlier: the children from non-English-speaking homes made slightly greater progress in their English competency during the year in the State Prekindergarten Program.

Conclusion. In summary, the average child in the State Prekindergarten Program who took the PRE-LAS test showed an appreciable progress in the mastery of English over the course of one school year. Individual scores showed the most improvement in children who came from non-English-speaking homes whereas increase in PRE-LAS level was most common among native English speakers. Because the PRE-LAS was only administered in English, overall language development for nonnative English speakers cannot be extrapolated from these results. However, approximately 30 percent of the children tested could be considered fluent speakers of English by the end of the year.

The results also show some improvement over last year in terms of progress made. The average gain scores increased slightly and the percentage of children showing appreciable progress increased.

Longitudinal Study

Each year the Department of Research, Evaluation and Planning asks teachers to evaluate the progress of their students who attended State Prekindergarten. Teachers rate children's performance in areas such as math, reading, behavior, promotion status, language, and self-confidence. Staff analysts then use this information to assess the impact of preschool experiences on students' long-term academic progress. This section analyzes the information obtained from teachers' ratings of these children.

This year a random sample of approximately 18,000 former State Prekindergarten children was included in the follow-up study. Teacher ratings, however, were received for only about 14,000 children. Demographically, the sample at each age level was similar to every other age level and to the population of children currently enrolled in the State Prekindergarten Program. (See Table 9.1.) The number of boys and girls was approximately equal. The largest differences occurred at kindergarten, third, and fifth grades where one of the sexes made up 52 percent of the group.

Table 9.1
Comparison of Preschool Graduates and their Peers: Background Characteristics
(By Percentages)

Grade	K	KC	1st	1stC	2nd	2ndC	3rd	3rdC	4th	4thC	5th	5thC
Number	7,543	215	3,981	208	3,023	284	1,660	161	1,188	242	586	567
Gender												
Male	52.0	53.5	49.9	51.7	50.4	48.8	52.3	51.1	50.6	46.4	48.4	51.0
Female	48.0	46.5	50.1	48.3	49.6	51.2	47.7	48.9	49.4	53.6	51.6	49.0
Ethnicity												
African American	47.1	42.8	49.3	54.7	58.4	54.4	63.7	62.8	72.3	71.9	71.4	67.9
Latino	37.4	45.6	38.1	32.4	31.8	34.6	29.6	28.0	22.2	20.5	23.1	24.0
Euro-American	11.9	10.7	9.6	12.0	7.6	9.2	4.9	7.4	4.4	6.0	4.2	6.4
Asian	3.5	.9	2.8	.8	1.9	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.5
American Indian	.2		.2		.3		.1			.5	.3	.3
Low Income	78.1		83.6		84.7		87.2		84.8		82.6	

As indicated earlier in the report, the percentage of African American children enrolled in the State Prekindergarten Program has decreased each year. This same trend is evident in the longitudinal sample. The Latino population has increased over the years. The percentage of low income enrollees varied from 78 percent of the kindergarten group to 87 percent of the third graders. There was no consistent trend in the percentage of low income students enrolled over that time period.

Table 9.2 shows the percentage of children at each grade level who were rated by their teachers as average or above average on a variety of measures. As in previous years, teachers' ratings were generally less positive the further children were from their preschool years. Note, however, that the drops from first to second grade and from fourth to fifth grade were not as great as they were between other grade levels. In fact, teachers rated a higher percentage of fifth than fourth graders as average or above average in reading, readiness for next grade, understanding the meaning in stories, self-confidence, and completion of tasks. Teachers rated a larger percentage of second graders than first graders as average or above average in reading, motivation, following directions, understanding the meaning of stories, and self-confidence. The differences here, however, were not as great as between the ratings of fourth and fifth graders.

At every grade, ratings in reading were the lowest. Ratings in math were quite high except for fourth and fifth graders. Ratings in self-confidence, plays/works well with others, and behavior were consistently high across each grade level.

Table 9.2
Percentage of Preschool Graduates Rated Average and Above Average by Their Grade School Teachers

Category	Kinder-garten (N=5179)	First Grade (N=3981)	Second Grade (N=3023)	Third Grade (N=1660)	Fourth Grade (N=1188)	Fifth Grade (N=567)
Reading	78.7	73.4	74.7	68.6	65.8	70.0
Math	83.8	81.8	80.9	73.2	67.1	64.2
Language	85.1	81.3	80.4	74.4	72.8	75.0
Behavior	83.2	81.4	79.3	77.3	74.6	76.3
Readiness for Next Grade	84.3	77.1	73.0	68.5	77.6	70.9
Plays/Works with Others	88.0	85.7	82.7	81.2	80.8	80.9
Motivated	86.3	80.8	81.2	77.2	75.1	72.8
Follows Directions	83.9	77.4	77.9	74.0	72.1	77.1
Story Meaning	86.1	78.5	78.6	73.3	72.0	78.0
Self-confidence	86.5	80.4	81.1	76.5	76.7	78.3
Completes Tasks	84.3	76.1	74.4	69.7	67.3	68.4
Promote	84.4	77.9	76.5	72.9	72.0	73.7
Promote with Supplemental Help	10.0	12.3	14.1	16.4	18.5	17.8
Promote with Special Education Help	2.1	2.4	3.9	4.4	5.6	4.9
Refer to Special Education Class	0.2	1.1	1.4	1.9	1.5	1.2
Refer to Bilingual Class	2.8	2.5	1.5	2.2	0.9	0.3
Retain at Grade	0.5	3.8	2.6	2.2	1.5	2.1
Parent Involvement	77.4	78.9	77.1	77.2	78.3	78.1

Concerning promotion status, staff evaluators compared the number of children promoted outright; those promoted with supplementary help; promoted with special education services; and retained. Evaluation results showed that the closer in grade that children were to preschool, the more likely they were to be promoted outright. This pattern of greater, positive effects closer in time to preschool enrollment was repeated in all areas that were examined.

Staff analysts also compared the number of children receiving special education services with those needing only the services of extra academic help. While the percentage of children in each cohort receiving these services increased over time (except from fourth to fifth grade), the percentage of children being referred

for special education services did not increase as much. The percentage of children at each grade level who were to be referred for possible placement in a special education, self-contained classroom remained relatively constant at 1.5 percent.

This study also analyzed changes in parent support. These findings deviated from the previously mentioned patterns. According to teacher ratings, parent support remained almost constant at 77 to 78 percent at each grade level.

While teachers' ratings of State Prekindergarten graduates may not be as positive as hoped, especially in the middle grades (fourth and fifth), they are encouraging when two factors are considered. First, these children were expected to be low-achievers. Based on a comprehensive screening process, these children demonstrated one or multiple (usually the latter) characteristics which suggested they were at risk of being less successful than their peers in school. In addition, these results are in keeping with the findings cited earlier from other research studies - one or two years of a preschool or other early intervention do not compensate for the factors that placed these children at risk.

While the Department of Research, Evaluation and Planning monitors the yearly academic progress of children who at one time attended the State Prekindergarten Program, the Department also examines, for comparison purposes, the progress of students screened for the program but who never received its services. Much research in early childhood has documented the initial effects of early intervention programs; however, the current literature suggests mixed findings on their long-term impact: Some studies (e.g., White, 1985) reveal initial positive IQ effects that fade by approximately third grade; others conclude that these positive cognitive effects remain stable over time (Ramey & Campbell, 1991); while still others suggest that the initial effects of positive social competence increase with time (Berruta-Clement et al., 1984). Analysis of children's progress in the Chicago Public Schools found similar, unclear long-term benefits of the preschool experience alone. In the report, *Evaluation of the 1992 State Prekindergarten Program*, analyses of longitudinal data showed that family income and parental involvement accounted for a significant proportion of the variance in *Iowa Tests of Basic Skills* reading and math scores. "Whether or not a child had attended State Prekindergarten did not significantly or consistently impact his/her long-term academic progress" (p. 34).

Table 9.3 shows the mean ratings for children from State Prekindergarten Program and children in the comparison group (screened and found eligible but never enrolled in State Prekindergarten). The mean ratings (1=low, 5=high) are given for each group of children from kindergarten through fifth grade. Again this year, no clear pattern emerges between the two groups. The State Prekindergarten graduates receive substantially higher ratings than the comparison group in 15 of 66 comparisons while the comparison group receives substantially higher ratings in 14. All of the other comparisons are close--essentially little or no difference. Even when potentially confounding variables, i.e., gender, ethnicity, income, etc. are considered, no clear trends or patterns which may explain the findings are evident. (See Table 9.1 for the demographic characteristics of children in the comparison group.) The results are mildly encouraging though when one takes into account the assumption that the comparison group overall was not as highly at risk as the State Prekindergarten group. The truth of this hypothesis is bolstered by the knowledge that the most at-risk children were enrolled first at each center.

Table 9.3
Comparison of Preschool Graduates and their Peers: Mean Teacher Ratings
(4 = Above Average; 1 = Low, Inadequate)

Grade	K	KC	1st	1stC	2nd	2ndC	3rd	3rdC	4th	4thC	5th	5thC
Number	5,179	215	3,981	208	3,023	284	1,660	161	1,188	242	586	567
Category												
Reading	3.0	3.1	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.9	2.7	2.8	3.0	2.6	2.7	2.6
Math	3.1	3.1	3.0	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.8	2.9	2.7	2.6	2.6	2.6
Language	3.1	3.2	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.1	2.8	2.9	2.8	2.7	2.8	2.7
Behavior	3.1	3.1	3.0	3.1	3.0	2.9	2.9	3.0	2.9	2.8	2.9	2.9
Ready for next grade	3.1	3.2	2.9	2.9	2.9	3.2	2.7	2.8	2.7	2.6	2.7	2.7
Plays	3.2	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.0	3.1	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Motivated	3.2	3.3	3.1	3.1	31	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.9	2.8	2.9	2.8
Follow Directions	3.1	3.3	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.9	3.0	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.8
Story Mean	3.2	3.2	3.0	2.9	3.0	3.0	2.8	2.9	2.8	2.7	2.9	2.7
Self-Confidence	3.1	3.2	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.1	2.9	3.0	2.9	2.8	2.9	2.8
Completes Tasks	3.1	3.2	3.0	3.0	2.9	3.0	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.8	2.7
Number of Days Absent	12.0		8.7		7.9		7.5		8.0		8.1	
Parent Involvement	3.1	2.8	3.1	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.9	3.0	2.9	3.0	2.9

Essentially, the results support what previous research has also shown: children's gains from attending preschool evaporate over time, with substantial effects lasting only into first grade. More importantly, it was found that at-risk students may need continued --not isolated-- academic support to succeed in school. They may require an educational program that continues throughout their early years in school, solidifying, maintaining, and building on the benefits of preschool. These findings were identified in the longitudinal study of children from Child Parent Centers. Findings from that study indicate that preschool and kindergarten interventions, in and of themselves, are not enough to improve children's school adjustment in grade five. Only children who received four or five years of continuous intervention services were superior to a comparison group of children on academic achievement, evidence of grade retention and teacher ratings" (Reynolds, et al. 1991).

Conclusions and Recommendations

The State Prekindergarten Program continued to serve academically at-risk children through a developmentally appropriate, child-centered program consistent with the standards established by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Most of the children (84 percent) came from low-income homes, and one-third were limited English proficient. As the program expanded over the past few years, every effort was made to include all eligible children. Extended-day classrooms (2:45-5:15) and modular units opened in many areas where space was not available in the schools. Children who needed a full day program were served through a subcontracting program with 31 child-care agencies throughout the city. Special needs children were integrated with at-risk children at three sites. The CPS Department of Early Childhood Education collaborated with several other agencies in order to better meet the needs of children and families. State Prekindergarten classrooms were opened to serve children whose mothers were attending high school, GED classes, and drug treatment programs or who had to leave their homes and were temporarily being housed at Columbus-Maryville. Teachers and assistants who spoke the language of the children were employed whenever possible to provide a literacy-rich environment in the child's home language.

Observations of State Prekindergarten classrooms showed that the program generally operated according to proposed guidelines. Interest centers were established in all observed classrooms, and nearly all provided opportunities for active exploration and a range of developmental abilities. Some teachers were observed facilitating children's learning by extending play, asking open-ended questions, and encouraging students to solve problems for themselves. Sometimes, however, adults solved problems children could have solved themselves or averted situations in which such "problems" might occur.

In three-fourths of the observed classrooms, teachers responded positively to children, expressing respect and acceptance regardless of the children's behavior. Teachers were observed talking one-on-one with children and using physical gestures, such as hugging or touching to promote children's self-esteem and confidence.

Teachers encouraged language and literacy development through meaningful experiences such as listening to stories, one-on-one conversations, and peer collaboration. Their efforts to provide literacy-rich environments varied from site to site. Many techniques, however, were observed less frequently this year than last. Shared reading activities, teacher-facilitated discussions using open-ended questioning, labels, experience charts, and children looking at books were observed less frequently in 1992-93. Children taking books home from the lending library was observed more frequently. Although some classrooms established

writing centers, few were observed in use. Dictated stories and story dramatization also were observed infrequently.

Many teachers addressed language and ethnic issues by incorporating into both the curriculum and classroom the symbols, rituals, music, and language of African American, Latino, and Asian children. These materials, as in previous years, generally mirrored the school's student population. Teachers were less likely to eliminate gender biases. Unnecessary gender distinctions were introduced by activities, i.e., instructing children to form lines of all boys and all girls. With the increased focus on including special needs children, observers saw more pictures and dolls illustrating people with handicapping conditions.

Overall, children enrolled in the State Prekindergarten Program for the 1992-93 school year demonstrated mastery of the readiness skills necessary for continued success in school. Based on teacher observation, the average three-year-old mastered approximately 30 percent of the skills on the *Child Assessment Summary Form* at the beginning of the school year and 60 percent at the end. The average four-year-old mastered 40 percent at the beginning and 76 percent at the end. Many of the children, especially in the three-year-old group, did not begin school in September; consequently this gain does not represent the effect of a whole year of intervention in some cases.

Language skills, although one of the weakest areas, showed marked improvement. Mastery of language skills on the *Child Assessment Summary Form* and scores on the *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test - Revised* improved. On the *Child Assessment Summary Form*, the changes in average number of skills mastered from the beginning to the end of the year in oral language, literacy/reading, and literacy/writing were greater than one standard deviation. Gains in receptive language indicated by children's scores on the PPVT-R/TVIP at screening and the end of the 1992-93 school year increased slightly (from the first to the fifth percentile) for children who took the test in English, and increased substantially for children who took the Spanish version (from the 7th to the 27th percentile).

Results of the PRE-LAS showed that the average child made appreciable progress in mastery of English over the course of one school year. Individual scores showed the most improvement for children who came from non-English-speaking homes whereas increase in PRE-LAS level was most common among native English speakers. Because the PRE-LAS was only administered in English, overall language development for nonnative English speakers cannot be extrapolated from these results. However, approximately 30 percent of the children tested could be considered fluent speakers of English by the end of the year.

Results of the longitudinal study confirm what other research studies have shown: the further one gets from the early intervention, the more diminished the effect. The closer in grade that children were to preschool, the more likely they were to be promoted without requiring extra special education or supplemental help. In the areas of reading, math, and language, students' performance followed the same pattern: teachers rated children's academic performance increasingly poorer as their time away from preschool grew. Although more positive long-term effects are desirable, the data are encouraging. In general, children who attended preschool (the more at risk children based on screening measures) performed comparably or better in kindergarten through fifth grade than children who did not have a preschool experience (the comparison group).

Based on evaluation findings, several changes in program implementation were suggested. The findings and suggested recommendations were shared with program administrators throughout the year. Recommendations suggested by the data are:

- Provide additional open-ended activities and questions to further stimulate children's reasoning and creativity.

- Continue to emphasize language development. Because participants were chosen on the basis of being most at risk of academic failure resulting from learning and/or economic disadvantages and language was their weakest area on screening measures, the urgency to improve literacy development as a major component of the curriculum cannot be overstated.

- Continue to provide support and inservice training for teachers on practical ways to implement literacy materials and whole-language activities across the curriculum.

- Incorporate children's diverse family situations in the classroom and portray them as positive.

- Push for implementation of early childhood units serving children through age eight. Research studies conducted in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and elsewhere have shown that if the early intervention is continued through second or third grade, its effectiveness is stronger and more lasting. This was also a strong recommendation from the CPS Superintendent's Task Force on Early Education (Chicago's Challenge: Serving Young Children with Commitment, Collaboration, and Excellence, 1992) and was the main thrust of the concept paper presented to the Education Support Committee of the CPS Board of Education in May 1994 (Opening the Windows to Learning, 1994). The committee authorized the Department of Early Childhood Education begin implementation of these units.

HEALTH AND NUTRITION COMPONENT

As an essential part of State Prekindergarten's mission and effectiveness, the program provides comprehensive health services to enrolled children. Available services range from medical, dental, nutritional, and mental health to preventative health and early intervention services. In conjunction with this goal, State Prekindergarten also coordinates a health component for parents. Through this component, the program tries to educate adult family members about nutrition and general health issues. It hopes to teach adult family members the skills necessary so that they can direct family health care decisions. Using this dual strategy, the program tries to both establish children's physical and mental health now and to encourage that families make healthy life choices, choices that will help promote and ensure children's long-term health.

To meet this agenda, the State Prekindergarten Program employs a broad-based health staff comprised of one nutritionist, eight registered school nurses, sixteen licensed practical nurses, eight health aides, and eight vision and hearing specialists. These health professionals work as a team within each of the eight clusters. Individually and collectively they educate both classroom staff and parents, screen children for visual and hearing problems, follow up on children's immunizations and other health concerns, and act as a resource for parents and classroom staff, referring them to outside agencies that can address and support their individual needs.

Throughout the year the health team worked with children, teachers, and parents in various ways, promoting better health and nutrition for the families served. They screened children, took students' health histories, reviewed children's medical records, assisted parents in obtaining needed medical services, and followed up on health problems. Given their wide-ranging duties, health staff indicated they would like additional information on alcohol and drug problems and prevention, nutrition, attention deficit disorders, learning disabilities, and parental stress management.

Screening Services

Vision and Hearing Screening

Each child is required to have a vision and hearing screening before being enrolled in State Prekindergarten. Specialists from the health team, specifically trained in these areas, administered the tests to determine hearing/vision acuity and to screen for other possible problems. Classroom and health staff encouraged parents to be present during the screening, hoping that their presence would make children secure enough to complete the tests. Health staff followed up on all children that could not or simply refused to take one/both tests, making a second attempt to test them within six months of their being enrolled in the program. Additionally, all children who failed vision and/or hearing screening were referred for follow-up treatment.

Dental and Lead Screening

During the year, the health staff screened children for both potential dental problems and high levels of lead in their bodies. For lead screening, a Board of Education health team sent one nurse and one assistant, along with women from the Board of Health, to draw the children's blood. Two women drew the blood, while a third woman kept the records.

In the past, lead screening procedures had sometimes frightened children. The health staff lined children up, calling them one by one to draw blood. Because of the small space available for screening, children stood in line and witnessed as the health team drew blood from children about two feet away. They saw the needles and heard children cry, heightening this already anxiety-provoking situation. These problems were called to the health team's attention and this year they occurred less frequently.

Tuberculosis Screening

The State Prekindergarten Program encourages parents to volunteer in the classroom. However, before parents can volunteer, they must have a tuberculosis test. Spread through germs by coughing, even today TB is considered a potential and increasing public health risk. This requirement then protects the health of all students and adults.

Nutrition Services

Nutrition in the Classroom

Classroom Meals. The State Prekindergarten Program provided free meals for all children regardless of their eligibility for the School Breakfast and Lunch Program. Children in morning classes received breakfast and lunch, while those in afternoon sessions were served lunch and a snack. All-day programs served breakfast, lunch, and snacks. Extended-day children were served a three-component snack. As part of its philosophy, the program advocates that meals be served family style, in the classroom (as opposed to going to the lunchroom), and suggests that staff sit with students and engage them in conversation throughout the meal. It also recommends that staff involve children in mealtime activities, from setting the table and preparing food to serving it and cleaning up afterward. In response to recommendations from the Illinois State Board of Education Program Review team, the State Prekindergarten budget provided free meals for two parent volunteers per class session.

Nutrition Education for Children. The State Prekindergarten Program sees educating children about nutrition as an integral component of its total mission. To this end, teachers designed nutrition activities for the students and carried them out in their classroom. Through these various hands-on activities, children were instructed in basic hygiene practices and food safety; the different kinds of foods that people eat in the United States and in other parts of the world; how food contributes toward helping children grow, remain healthy, and have lots of energy; how various foods are prepared; and how foods vary radically in size, color, shape, sound, and taste. To conduct these weekly activities, State Prekindergarten provided each teacher with monies targeted specifically for weekly nutrition activities.

Nutrition Education for Classroom and Resource Staff

Throughout the school year, State Prekindergarten's nutritionist held inservices for classroom and resource staff. At these meetings, she discussed crucial nutrition concepts so that classroom staff and students could prepare more nutritionally balanced meals and snacks. Topics included the proper proportions of different foods for children and ideas for appropriate snacks.

This year the nutritionist also held an inservice for State Prekindergarten nurses and social workers. It dealt with aspects and issues concerning obese children and their families. At this meeting, they discussed how to define obesity in children, its physical, cultural, and social ramifications, and possible options for intervention, treatment, and referral. Also discussed at this meeting were the various state and federal food programs available to low-income families, and who is eligible for each program. The nurses and social workers who attended the inservice remarked that they had learned a great deal about so prevalent and potentially life-threatening a health problem as obesity, and indicated that they would greatly appreciate further inservices to address other childhood problems.

Health Services

Classroom Staff Inservices

The Bureau of Medical and School Health Services, in conjunction with the Department of Early Childhood Education, conducted inservices for State Prekindergarten staff and parents. Throughout the year, the health team educated classroom staff about important health and safety issues. At inservices and cluster meetings, they discussed the hygienic way of washing hands and of sneezing (Children are now taught to sneeze by directing their head under their armpit), and how to encourage children to follow these hygiene habits. They also talked about preventing exposure to blood and other bodily fluids; provided information on the HIV virus and drug-dependent children; and instructed adults in how to avoid, recognize, and treat food poisoning and other food-borne illnesses. The health team also explained why children must be immunized, the length of time an infected child is contagious for specific diseases, and how long parents should keep children out of school.

Follow-up and Support in the Classroom

Nurses affiliated with State Prekindergarten performed multiple duties. Throughout the year they trained classroom staff and acted as the principal health resource for them, spoke at parent meetings, made sure all enrolled children had received the necessary immunizations, and even gave health exams. When necessary, nurses made referrals and did follow-ups with the parents' approval. To support these efforts, nurses worked closely with different community agencies such as the Chicago Health Department and some community doctors, and also made referrals to audiologists and pathologists.

Services for Parents and Families

To encourage parents' participation, many health activities specifically targeted parents of State Prekindergarten students. As part of this effort, nurses, along with the family resource team, visited the schools and met with parents. Nurses also informed parents that other family members were invited to attend these meetings.

Parent Meetings

As one of its principal duties, the health staff educated parents. Throughout the year, the health team attended parent meetings, speaking to them about important health and safety issues. At these meetings, parents learned about nutrition and food safety issues, about how to recognize different childhood illnesses, and where to turn in emergencies. Parents stated that they enjoyed those meetings that dealt with common

health problems, as well as those covering HIV, drugs and drug-dependency, community and school violence, nutrition, and child development.

Health Fairs

This year, as in previous years, the clusters held health fairs for parents. Parents could weigh themselves, get their blood pressure checked, and receive vision and hearing tests. Several agencies gave out information regarding nutrition, HIV, lead poisoning, dental care, and cancer. At one cluster, women over 40 were given a certificate for a free mammogram. Several clusters had exhibits on pediatrics and mental health. Planned Parenthood, one of the agencies present, distributed literature about family planning and contraceptives, and condoms. The National College of Chiropractics had an exhibit staffed by interns, who examined individuals' posture and bone structure as signs of bone diseases needing attention. While at several booths parents could rely on Spanish translators to help them, parents speaking other languages could count on no such help. Most, instead, had brought children to translate for them.

Parents expressed both positive and negative comments about the fairs. Some felt that too many booths gave out only written material. They would have preferred that more testing be done. They also indicated that, at those booths where testing was available, the waiting lines were long. Other parents enjoyed the information pertaining to childhood health and development.

Health Newsletter

This year State Prekindergarten also published health newsletters. They dealt with a wide variety of health issues and offered parents various health tips. Newsletters suggested activities parents could do at home to reinforce nutrition and health concepts that their children learned in school.

Mental Health Services

State Prekindergarten also provided families with temporary and emergency mental health services. Often health personnel from the various agencies came out to schools, talking to classroom staff and parents about their specific needs. The service most often requested concerned how to manage parental stress. Parents who found themselves under a lot of stress and expressed fear that they would take it out on their children were quickly referred for counseling and other preventive services. This service attempted to help parents recognize when they were under severe stress, cope with it, and find beneficial ways of dealing with their children.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The State Prekindergarten Program allocated numerous resources--personnel, materials, training sessions, and medical screenings--to promote and ensure good health and nutrition for the children and families served. Good health and nutrition practices were modeled in the classroom through nutrition activities, eating healthful meals together, washing hands before meals and after toileting, and discussing the reasons for these and other activities to maintain good health. Nurses and other health team members followed up in cases where screenings had not been completed or where the screening or classroom teacher identified a potential health problem or risk. Counseling and referrals were made when warranted. In addition, health staff educated parents on good health and nutrition practices and how/when to utilize the health resources

in their communities. Parent meetings and workshops, newsletters, health fairs, and one-on-one counseling were the main avenues for this communication.

Although documentation supports the occurrence of these many and varied activities, little evidence exists to show their effectiveness. Intuitively, one would expect these activities to have a positive impact but the evaluation collected very little empirical evidence to support that assumption. This is mainly because of the difficulty of reliably measuring changes in families' health and nutrition habits and following their long-range health histories.

Health records indicate that most of the children who did not receive vision or hearing tests at the time of screening were given one within six months of enrollment in the program. Also, parents' responses to evaluation surveys about the program, the parent meetings, and the health fair were generally favorable. In fact, some parents made unsolicited comments on the end-of-the-year *Parent Questionnaire* about ways the program had enabled them to obtain needed health care or shown them how to prepare healthier meals.

Next year, questions specific to families' health and nutrition practices should be included on the *Parent Questionnaire*. In addition, a review of health records for children in a small sample of classrooms and interviews with some of their parents would provide further evidence of the health team's activities and its effectiveness.

PARENT AND FAMILY COMPONENT

Parent participation was an important component of the State Prekindergarten Program. It provided the opportunity for staff and parents to work together to enhance the education of the total child and it enabled parents to better understand their children's needs, growth, and development.

The parent involvement program also sought to increase parents' self-esteem and strengthen family pride. It helped parents organize and assess their needs and locate and take advantage of resources that could benefit the entire family. The program linked parents with resource and service agencies in their communities and provided them with information about adult literacy programs, community educational resources (e.g., colleges, libraries, and museums) and medical, mental health, and social services. Family resource staff also encouraged parents to participate in school organizations and to stay involved in the education of their children beyond preschool.

A major goal of the parent program was to involve parents as volunteers in the classroom. Volunteering gave parents an opportunity to observe how young children learn and provided assistance to the teaching staff in a variety of ways. The program also helped parents develop skills that assisted their children at home. This was accomplished through parent meetings and information sent home by the teaching staff.

A family resource staff comprised of teachers, assistants, social workers and social service assistants worked with parents to meet the objectives of the parent education and involvement component of the State Prekindergarten Program. Each staff member served an average number of fifteen schools. They also worked in conjunction with the teaching staff to provide an educational program that explained the general classroom volunteer requirements and helped parents develop skills that assisted them in working with their children. Supportive mental health services were given to parents to meet their own emotional needs as well as their children's.

Soon after school started, family resource staff scheduled orientation meetings to give parents information about the program. Slides were shown of children involved in activities in the classroom and parents on field trips. The pictures were a way to inform parents how they could assist in the classroom and also show the kinds of activities in which parents could participate. One cluster asked parents to complete a "Parent Talent and Skill" form so their talents could be utilized when they volunteered. Family resource staff encouraged the parents to give them suggestions for meeting topics. Crafts were exhibited at the meetings to show the kinds of things made during the previous year. These ranged from children's educational games to jewelry or decorations for the home.

Generally, meetings were held twice a month in each school. The objective of one of the meetings was parent education. Sometimes an outside person from the community spoke to the group. Topics such as disciplining children, nutrition, budgeting, health, literacy, etc. were covered. Family resource teachers also spoke to the parents about child development, curriculum used in the classroom, and antibias and multicultural education. One family resource teacher, a licensed CPR instructor, taught CPR to the parents and awarded them a certificate at the completion of the session.

During the second monthly meeting, parents met to make a craft item. These workshops gave parents and teachers an opportunity to get better acquainted. Parents enjoyed meeting one another, shared concerns

about their children, and obtained information to help their families and themselves. The average attendance at both types of meetings was eight to ten parents including both mothers and fathers.

Family resource staff arranged a variety of field trips around the city to introduce parents to educational attractions. They were taken to city colleges in their neighborhood to inform them about classes offered. One cluster took parents to the Cosmetology School at Truman College where they learned about the program and received free services such as hair styling, make-up demonstrations, manicures, etc.

Clusters joined together and held health fairs at Malcolm X College on the north side and Kennedy King College on the south side. Many exhibitors were present to give health care information and personnel tested blood pressure, hearing, vision and cholesterol. Over 1000 parents attended these fairs. One cluster held a multicultural fair at Malcolm X College, also. Sites throughout the cluster were chosen to participate with food and nutritional activities, music and dramatization, language arts, or math and science. Parents were involved in the planning and it was well attended.

Other field trips included an all-day retreat for parents at a center outside the city, ethnic museums, farmer's markets, etc. Many parents had not ventured to some of these places so these trips gave them the opportunity to visit and perhaps return with their children.

Because parent involvement was an important part of the State Prekindergarten Program, information was obtained from several sources. One source was the family resource staff. Another source was the records kept by the teachers throughout the year. Teachers and assistants who responded to the questionnaire also provided information about parent involvement. In addition, staff from the Department of Research, Evaluation and Planning developed a parent survey to obtain parents' impressions and concerns about the total prekindergarten program.

Family Resource Staff's Opinions about the Parent Program

Family resource staff members responded to a needs assessment in the spring of 1993. Finding new strategies to support classroom staff and learning additional ways to involve parents in a working relationship with the school were listed as high priorities. Another goal was expanding literacy activities for children and parents. Family resource staff suggested developing directories of services in each area of the city which would include libraries, park districts, YMCAs and other community resources. The number of direct services provided to families varied greatly depending on the resource team and the families' needs.

One staff member said that the limited space for parent meetings seldom provided a comfortable setting for discussion and activities. Another issue for some of the parent resource staff was servicing schools where they did not speak the parents' language. When asked what topics they would choose to learn more about to strengthen their professional growth, family resource staff listed multicultural education, community resources for referrals, nutritional needs, and computer skills.

Classroom Staff's Opinions about the Parent Program

Parent Participation as Reported by Teachers on the CAP Form

Teachers reported on the ways children's parents participated in the program. This information was collected on the *Child Assessment Summary Form* (CAP) for the parents of 10,735 children enrolled in the State Prekindergarten Program. According to teachers, 88 percent of the parents participated in at least one activity and many participated in two or more. Table 10 shows the number and percentage of parents who participated in each type of activity.

Table 10
Parent Participation as Reported by Classroom Teachers on the *Child Assessment Summary Form*
(N = 10,735 participating parents)

Activity	Number of Families	Percent of Families*
Volunteered in classroom	5535	51.6
Attended student field trips	4650	43.3
Participated in parent classes, meetings, and workshops	5404	50.3
Provided reinforcement at home	5250	48.9
Attended parent-teacher conferences	7034	65.5
Participated in other ways	1274	11.9
Did not participate	1263	11.8

*Percentages total more than 100 because of multiple responses.

Although the number of families in the State Prekindergarten Program increased, teachers reported that a lower percentage of parents participated in FY 93 than in FY 92. The number of parent volunteers in the classroom was down four percentage points. Parent participation in meetings, workshops and classes was down 14 percent. Teachers reported 65 percent of the parents attended a parent-teacher conference, compared to last year's figure of 71 percent.

Parent Participation as Reported on the Teacher Questionnaire

Information received from the teacher questionnaires stated that over 60 percent of the teachers felt that parent participation at school was good; in fact, 36 percent responded that it was very good in their schools. An even higher number, 70 percent, stated there was good parent support with school work at home. The teachers responded much more positively in FY 93 about parent volunteers in the classroom than in past years, stating that 68 percent of the parents were consistently helpful and found appropriate ways to assist. Fifty-four percent said they had a parent in the classroom every day, and an average of 20 parents per classroom volunteered throughout the year to accompany the class on field trips.

When asked to indicate the program goals of most importance to them, a majority of the responding teachers mentioned ones that included parents. Teachers indicated increased cooperation between parents

and school (62 percent), greater parent understanding of child development (80 percent), and increased parent volunteering in the classroom (67 percent) were top priorities.

Teachers were asked for suggestions on ways to improve parent assistance in the classroom. "Make parents feel wanted, welcome, and useful" was one teacher's response, and this was echoed by several others. The responses given most often (37 percent each) were to teach parents the importance of developmentally appropriate activities for young children and how to assist the teacher in the classroom through parent volunteer workshops. Many teachers said the family resource teachers could conduct these, but several teachers said they would like to be a part of it also. Quite a few teachers strongly recommended mandatory assistance by parents in the classroom. Many felt the screeners should explain the importance of the parents' role in the classroom during the initial interview. Several teachers also said they felt that some of the arts and craft projects made during parent meetings did not always benefit the goals of the program.

Parents' Opinions about the Parent Program

In the spring of 1993, 1,336 parents in a random sample of classrooms responded to the parent questionnaire. The questionnaire gathered information regarding parents' opinions and experiences concerning the following aspects of the program:

- parents' participation in the children's program
- the program's impact on the children
- the effect of the program on the child-parent relationship
- the program's impact on the parents' own lives

Parents' Participation in the Children's Program

Teachers did an excellent job communicating with the parents through newsletters because 93 percent of the parents responded they had received them regularly and they were written in the native language of the parents most of the time. This year 78 percent said they had attended a school conference and over 44 percent said they had received a home visit. Sixty-seven percent said they had volunteered in their child's classroom at least once (73 percent last year). Although the percentage of classroom volunteers decreased somewhat, volunteers are receiving more training in how to help in the classroom. Ninety percent said they received some guidance from the teacher or assistant when volunteering in the classroom (74 percent in FY 92).

Impact of the Program on the Children

The parents' responses to the questionnaire indicated support and satisfaction with the program. Parents were asked questions pertaining to the educational objectives of the program and the responses were generally positive. An overwhelming majority (93 percent) replied they were generally pleased with their child's interest in learning and getting along with other children. Eighty-eight percent said their children

were more independent and generally finished the projects and tasks they started. Ninety-two percent said their children talked more and became excited about reading and listening to stories. Ninety percent said they thought their children would do well in school. When asked how often they read to their child, 84 percent of the parents replied at least several times a week.

Effect of the Program on the Child-Parent Relationship

A State Prekindergarten meeting or workshop was attended by 63 percent of the respondents, and, of those, 74 percent said they had enjoyed them and found the information helpful. Eighty percent answered that the program helped them understand their child's needs better and increased their parenting skills. One parent replied, "I'm more concerned about my child's needs now." Several parents also responded that they have become more involved in their child's school because they were encouraged to volunteer in the State Prekindergarten Program.

Effect of the Program on the Lives of The Parents

"The Program has helped me in a lot of ways. It has helped me learn the right way to talk to my kids and play with them and be a good parent. The Program has made school a good and fun place for me and my kids." This was how one parent summarized the effect the State Prekindergarten Program had on her family. Another parent wrote, "The Program has helped my family to communicate more frequently and helped my children to express themselves and their experiences better." Many parents wrote that they had a better understanding of child development since their children had been enrolled in the program. They saw the need to do fun activities with their children. One parent said that the program helped him/her learn where the public library was in the neighborhood. Sixty-five percent of the parents replied they had received information about community resources from the school or teacher. Parents' replies on the questionnaire indicated they felt the State Prekindergarten Program was excellent and helped the whole family in many ways.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Parent support and involvement were an essential component of the State Prekindergarten Program, and the parents who were involved benefited greatly from it, as did their children. The majority of parents were very pleased with the program. They indicated their children's language skills had increased, social and cognitive skills were learned, and they talked more with their children. In addition, several parents commented about their children's increased knowledge of English. Parents said they developed a better understanding and relationship with their children. They also stated their children were more confident, responsible, and cooperative.

The parents' replies also pointed out benefits to the family by bringing them closer together, and increasing their knowledge of child development. They learned better parenting skills, and a closer tie between home and school was established.

Teacher records taken from the CAP forms showed less parent participation than last year, although results from teacher and parent questionnaires showed higher figures. No matter which figures are correct, more parent participation is desirable. The family resource staff indicated that they would like more strategies to increase the number of parents involved. Teachers would also like more parent participation in the program.

Research has shown that parents who become involved with their children's education at the preschool level tend to stay involved with their children's education throughout their school years (Reynolds, 1992). In general, children whose parents continue to be involved in their education exhibit greater gains in achievement. Perhaps parent participation needs should be explained more fully from the initial contact, at screening. Perhaps an emphasis on the parent component by the entire staff is needed to seek innovative ways to increase family involvement. Seeking new ways and sharing successful ideas to involve parents in a *joint partnership* is a goal for the total staff to consider.

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